

S E R M O N S

ON SEVERAL

Important Subjects

OF

RELIGION and MORALITY.

To Which are added

T W O T R A C T S :

- I. A SUMMARY VIEW of the Doctrine of JUSTIFICATION :
- II. An ENQUIRY concerning the ANTIQUITY of the PRACTICE of INFANT-COMMUNION, as founded on the Notion of its STRICT NECESSITY.

In TWO VOLUMES.

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Important Subjects

RECORDS SECTION

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S E R M O N I.

St. PAUL's wish, 'Ανάθεμα εἶναι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, explained and illustrated.

ROM. IX. 3.

—I could wish that My Self were accursed from CHRIST, for my Brethren, my Kinsmen according to the Flesh.

THE Occasion, and general Meaning of these Words of the Apostle, are obvious enough: For St. PAUL having, in the foregoing Chapters, taught some Doctrines which He knew would be extremely grating and offensive to the *Jews*, thought it the more necessary to profess how warm an Affection He had for Them all the while, in order to convince Them, that his telling Them unwelcome Truths, proceeded not from any Aversion or Resentment He bore towards Them, but from the Love and Tenderness He had for Them, as well as from a just Regard to the Honour of Almighty God. In the Words therefore of the Text, He expresses his sincere and great Affection for Them, declaring how much He was concerned at the Spirit of Slumber fallen upon Them, and how contentedly He could suffer any Thing (that could be reasonable for Him to suffer) if He might but be any Way instrumental in rescuing Them from the sad Circumstances They were

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were in, and might procure for Them Pardon and Salvation. *I could wish that My Self were accursed from CHRIST for my Brethren, &c.* Very affectionate Words, strong and pathetic, the Language, doubtless, of a most generous Love, and a most exalted Charity. But while We acknowledge the Warmth and Ardency of his Affection, take We care to understand it in such a Sense, that it may be rational too; that it may be worthy of a wise and great Man, yea of a great Apostle, and Him conducted in what He wrote, by the Holy Spirit of God, What then could He mean by wishing Himself *accursed from CHRIST*? Is this a Sober or a Christian Wish, as it sounds at first hearing, and as expressed in these broad Terms? Some Divines of the mystick Way, have thought it reasonable for a Man to submit Himself even to everlasting Misery, to serve the Ends of God's Glory, and the general Good of Mankind: But the Thought is shocking, and the Thing impracticable: No Man can do it; neither is it rational, or pious, either to suppose, that God could admit of so absurd a Thing, or be pleas'd with a Wish so wild and extravagant. The more judicious Divines therefore, being sensible of this, while they have understood St. PAUL's Words of the *Curse everlasting*, yet have had recourse to *Figure* in the other Parts, and call'd it, upon the whole, a strong *Hyperbolical* Expression, such as ought not to be rigorously interpreted up to the Letter.

But still there may be a third way thought on, better than Either of the Former; which is to examine strictly into the *Original Greek*, whether it may not justly bear a milder and less exceptionable Rendering. It is observable, that the Words *Ἀνάθεμα εἶναι*, which We render by *accursed*, often signify no more than being devoted to temporal Death, or being made a *Sacrifice* of: And the Words *ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, which We render, *from CHRIST*, may signify *after CHRIST*, that is, after the *Example* of CHRIST. Let the whole Sentence then run thus: *I could be content, nay I should rejoice, to be made a Sacrifice My Self, after CHRIST (or as CHRIST has been before me) for my Brethren, my Kinsmen according to the Flesh.* The Greek Words [*ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*] will signify *after CHRIST*, as well as the like Phrase [*ἀπὸ πατέρων*,] elsewhere used by St. PAUL, signifies *after my Forefathers*, or as my Forefathers have before Me. *I thank my God whom I serve from my Forefathers,** or *as my Forefathers have done before Me.* So then, the true, and the literal Sense of the Apostle in the Text

is neither more nor less than This, that He wish'd to be devoted even to Death, for the eternal Salvation of His Brethren the *Jews*, in like Manner as CHRIST, his High Leader, had been devoted before Him. For as He taught his Doctrine, so He was desirous also to follow the Example of his Sufferings, as far as He might be capable of so doing.

The Rendering of the Text being thus corrected, and the Sense cleared, what I have more to say upon it, may be easy and plain. In the Text, as now construed, Two Things are offered to our serious and devout Meditation.

I. The exceeding great Love of CHRIST, in submitting Himself to Death, to be made a Sacrifice for the Salvation of Mankind.

II. The good Apostle's ardent Zeal and Desire, to die in like Manner, after CHRIST's Example, for the Salvation of his Brethren. Of these two Articles I shall distinctly treat in their Order.

I.

Let us duly weigh and consider the exceeding great Love of our Saviour CHRIST, shewn in submitting Himself to Death, to be made a Sacrifice, for the Salvation of Mankind. The Height and Depth of his Love towards Mankind will best appear from a Consideration of the Circumstances of that so generous, and so adorable an Act of Loving-Kindness. Consider *Who* it was that did it, *What* He did, for *Whom*, and for *what Ends*. All these Circumstances have their Weight, and very much enhance the Value of the Thing done, as well as heighten the Obligation.

1. The *Person* who submitted to suffer for us, was a very great and extraordinary Person; not a mere Man, not an Angel, or an Arch-angel, but infinitely higher still, even the Eternal Son of God; Who took Flesh upon Him, that He might be capable of suffering, bleeding, and dying for Us. Here lies the particular Stress and Emphasis of the Thing, according to the Scripture-Account of it; that God sent so great, so dear, and so divine a Person to die for us. *For God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son**. In This was manifested the Love of God towards Us, because, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the World, &c.† The Majesty and Greatness of the Person sent, heightens the Favour, and endears it to Us; as it is the greater Condescension in Him, and does the greater Honour to Us. St. PAUL expresses the

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whole

* John iii. 16.

† 1 John iv. 9.

whole Thing in very strong and lively Terms, thus: *Who being in the Form of God, thought it not Robbery to be equal with God; but, nevertheless, made Himself of no Reputation, and took upon Him the Form of a Servant, and so on.** See what an Emphasis is here laid upon the *Dignity* of the *Person* doing it. He was one that had the Form, the Majesty of God, and had a Right to be revered, honoured, and adored as God; and yet He submitted to become a Servant, by taking upon Him the Nature of Man, and in that Nature He died. Wonderful Condescension, and most disinterested Love, such as no inferior Person could have shown towards Us! Had the highest Angel or Archangel, had the brightest Cherub or Seraph done it, the Kindness had been Nothing in Comparison; because They are All Creatures of God, infinitely short of the Dignity of the Son of God: And however great They are, They are yet capable of being made greater, and of receiving fresh Honour and Dignity as a Reward for Well-doing; so that Their serving Us, would have been at the same Time serving Themselves. But the Eternal Son of God was so High and so Divine in Himself, that He was above being promoted higher: He could have no Interest of his Own to serve, no Ambition of his Own to gratify, in What He did: It was all done purely for Our Benefit; was perfectly free and generous, such as No *Creature* whatever could have shown towards Us. In a word, his Kindness excelled all that ever was done by created Beings, as much as the Dignity of his Person excelled Theirs; and that is infinitely.

2. Next, let us consider *What* He did, as well as *Who* did it, to give Us the more lively and affecting Idea of his Love towards Us. *He made Himself of no Reputation*, says the Apostle, *took upon Him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men*: That is to say, He veiled his Glories, He drew a Curtain (as it were) over his high and adorable God-head, condescending to take Part with frail Mortality, and to converse with Dust and Ashes. But This was not all: For the Apostle goes on; *Being found in Fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself*, yet farther, *and became obedient to Death, to the most painful and ignominious Death, even the Death of the Cross*† This was descending, as it were, from the highest Pinnacle of Glory, to the lowest Circumstances of Disgrace. For Crucifixion was a Punishment inflicted by the Romans upon Slaves only and Fugitives, and was looked upon as the most shameful of all their Ways of dispatching Criminals. Besides which, It is to be considered, that, according to the Maxim of the Jewish Law, *He that is hanged is accursed*

* Phil. ii. 6, 7. † Phil. ii. 7, 8.

curfed of God,† which is the Text that St. PAUL refers to, where He ſays, CHRIST bath redeemed Us from the Curſe of the Law, being made a Curſe for Us; For it is written, *Curſed is Every One that hangeth on a Tree.*‡ He was made a Curſe for Us, in the ſame Senſe as He was made Sin for Us,§ and, as St. PETER expreſſes it, *bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree.*|| That is to ſay, He ſtood in the Place of Sinners, and was contented to ſuffer in their Stead, and to be treated in ſuch Manner as They ought to have been treated, or as their Sins had deſerved. This was an Inſtance of exceeding great Love and Condeſcenſion, ſubmitting to appear as a Criminal, and to take upon Him all the Shame, and Odium, and Ignominy that belong to Sinners, though He had no Sins of his Own. He was content to be *accuſed*, in a certain Senſe, that is, to be devoted to Death, and to bear the Punishment of Sin, which Sin had the Curſe of God attending it; a Curſe, which CHRIST alone was able to take off. The Sins of the whole World were laid upon Him: He bare them, and took them upon Himſelf, ſuffering and dying for them; ſo great was his Condeſcenſion, ſo wonderful his Love towards Mankind. And this reminds Us,

3. Of another Circumſtance in this Affair, the Perſons for Whom He died; not for the Well-deſerving, or Innocent, but for Sinners, and Sinners againſt Himſelf. St. PAUL takes particular Notice of this Circumſtance alſo, making Uſe of it as a proper Conſideration for the magnifying and illuſtrating the Love of CHRIST. *Scarcely for a righteous (or juſt) Man will One die: yet peradventure for a good Man Some would even dare to die: But God commendeth his Love towards Us, in that While We were yet Sinners, CHRIST died for Us.*†† As much as to ſay, that It is a very rare Thing, that Any One ſhould die for the ſake of an honeſt, or juſt Man; and not very common to do it, even for a kind and moſt obliging Friend: But to be content to die for Thoſe Who were neither kind, nor juſt, but the contrary; to die for Sinners and Rebels, This is a Height of Generoſity beyond the common Meaſures, is without Precedent, and above all Compariſon. Such was the Love of CHRIST towards Mankind, Who had deſerved no ſuch Favour at his Hands, having rebelled againſt Him, and acted in Oppoſition to Him. *Greater Love bath No Man than This, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friend.*‡‡ But our Lord's Love was vaſtly greater, that He laid down his Life even for his Enemies.—*When We were Enemies,*

† Deut. xxi. 23.

§ 2 Cor. v. 21.

†† Rom. v. 7, 8.

‡ Gal. iii. 23.

|| 1 Pet. ii. 24.

‡‡ John xv. 13.

Enemies; We were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son. The Just suffered for the Unjust, as St. PETER observes † which is such an Instance of generous Love, as no History can parallel, nor any human Thought or Imagination reach up to.*

4. But there is a further Consideration, which enhances the Value of it, and still more abundantly endears it to Us; which is, the *End* and *Design* of it, and the happy Consequences which it is directed to, and aims at. It is not barely to rescue Mankind from Punishment, and from eternal Misery, but It is to exalt Them to the highest and most desirable Privileges; and to confer upon Them everlasting Life, Glory, and Happiness. *In This was manifested the Love of God towards Us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that We might live through Him. ‡* But in another Place, St. JOHN is yet more expressive and emphatical, in these Words: *God so loved the World, that He gave his only begotten Son, that Whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life. ||* So then every Way, and in every Light, the Love of CHRIST towards Us is very apparent, and is beyond all Parallel. The eternal Son of God, equal with God, vouchsafed to humble Himself, to suffer, bleed and die, for Sinners, in Order to purchase for Them, not Pardon only, but Rewards, great and everlasting Rewards in the highest Heavens. Having thus endeavoured, however imperfectly, to set forth the exceeding great Love of CHRIST in dying for Us, I now pass on to the Second Article contained also in the Text;

II.

The good Apostle's ardent Zeal, and Desire, to die in like Manner, and after CHRIST's Example, for the Salvation of his Brethren. *I could wish that My Self were accursed from (or, after) CHRIST; that is, as CHRIST was before Me, for my Brethren, &c.* We are not to suppose, that the Apostle had a Thought of coming up, in any perfect Measure, to the great Example set by our Blessed Lord: But He was willing and desirous to copy after Him, in such Measure and Degree as He was capable of, and to follow his Pattern as far as He was able, by an humble and awful Imitation of Him. He very well knew, that one great Use among others, of our Lord's Sufferings, was, to instruct and stir us up to follow the Example. This is the Use which St. PAUL points to, where He says, *Let this Mind be in You, which was also in CHRIST JESUS; Who being in the Form of God, and so on: §*
St.

* Rom. v. 10. † 1 Pet. iii. 18. ‡ 1 John iv. 9. § 1 John iii. 16.
§ Phil. ii. 5, 6.

St. JOHN, the beloved Disciple, is very express and particular, in setting forth the Love of CHRIST, as an Example and Pattern for our Imitation. *Hereby perceive We the Love of God, because He laid down his Life for Us: And We (in Conformity) ought to lay down Our Lives for the Brethren.** Observe, It is not here said, for *Enemies*, for *Persecutors*, but for the *Brethren*. I know not whether St. PAUL's Example, in the Text, did not go beyond What St. JOHN here mentions as the bounden Duty of Every common Christian. It should seem by the emphatical Manner of Expression, which St. PAUL made Use of, that He himself thought it no ordinary Degree of Affection, no common Protestation, *I could wish that My Self were accursed*, and so on. And indeed the very Nature of the Thing shews, that it was not. For the Persons for whose sake He was so very willing to die the Death, were not his particular Friends, no nor so much as Christian Brethren: His Brethren They had been, and They were now hardened and obstinate *Jews*, Whom He had deserted, and Whom God had abandoned, and Who were St. PAUL's bitterest Enemies, and as great Enemies to the Gospel; yet such was his Affection even for Them, such his friendly Disposition towards Them, that He could have been content, yea glad, to have been *made a Curse*, that is, to have *suffered* any the most painful and ignominious Death, to do Them Service; to avert their Misery, and to promote their true Happiness. This was noble and generous, as well as charitable; was an Instance of Heroick Love, much resembling our Blessed Saviour's, being almost above human, and coming as near to divine, as Flesh and Blood was capable of doing. There is one more Instance of like Kind in holy Scripture, and but one, that belonged to meer Man: It was of a very great Prophet, Lawgiver, and Saint; I mean Moses, the meekest Man then upon Earth. When the *Israelites* had grievously affronted Him, and offended God as much, by making the Golden Calf, yet then (as it were forgiving and forgetting all their Rudeness towards Him) He begged to be Himself *blotted* out of the Book of Life, rather than the People should suffer Extremities. *Yet now, if thou wilt (says He in his Prayer to God) forgive their Sin; or, if not, blot Me, I pray Thee, out of thy Book which Thou hast written.†* Blotting out of God's Book is of the same Importance with *blotting out one's Name from under Heaven.‡* Which is an Expression signifying temporal Death and Destruction. Accordingly, Moses desired to die, or to be destroyed Himself,

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* 1 John iii. 16.

† Exod. xxxii. 32.

‡ Deut. ix. 26

self, from off the Land of the Living, rather than live to see his Nation perish, his People suffer, however justly They had deserved it. That Instance of MOSES, though very like This of St. PAUL, yet does not fully come up to it; because MOSES was more nearly related to the *Israelites* of that Time, and had a closer Interest and Concern with Them, than St. PAUL could have with the *Jews* of his Time, whose Religion and Party He had left for the Christian Church. However, both those Instances are very admirable, and come the nearest to the Divine Pattern set by our Lord, of any We shall meet with. The Use which We are to make of all these Instances, or Examples, is to learn to put on Tenderness and Compassion towards All Men; and even towards Those Who are not of our Society, Profession, Religion, or Party; those who have no Respect for Us, or are even prejudiced against Us. There is a Degree of Pity and Regard due even to very ill Men, to Ungodly, and Sinners: Not to be shown by caressing Them, and smiling upon Them, but by earnest and ardent Endeavours to reclaim Them. It is afflicting to a good Man to observe how Sinners run headlong on to their own Ruin: And though it may be said, that They deserve the less Pity because it is their own Fault, and They choose to do so; yet there is something really pitiable in that Depravity of Will, and Blindness of Heart, which drives Them on to make such ill Choices. There is not a more forlorn and miserable Wretch under Heaven, than an over-grown Sinner, become mad, desperate, and incurable in his Sins. For, though such Persons regard neither God nor Man, nor have any Mercy or Tenderness for Friend or Brother, but would go any Lengths in Mischief, and set the World on Fire (if it lay in their Power); yet We very well know, all the while, that They are weak and impotent, are under Bridle and Restraint, and must wait for God's Leave before They can do any Thing. The utmost They can do, is only to afflict and torment good Men for a Time here, while They Themselves lie exposed to eternal Vengeance, to Torments everlasting hereafter. This Consideration may sometimes move a good Man's Pity and tender Compassion, as was St. PAUL's Case in the Text, while He lamented over the hardened *Jews*, his Adversaries and Persecutors, and would have wished even Himself to die a thousand Deaths for Them, so He might but reform and save Them. This affectionate Temper of Mind, this benevolent Disposition towards All Men, is What the Text recommends to Us in two Examples, One of our Blessed Lord himself, and the Other of our Lord's

Lord's Apostle. Learn We from Both to be kind, friendly, and compassionate One towards Another, and to have a true Value and Concern both for the Bodies and the Souls of Men. We shall find Matter enough for our Exercise and Improvement in this heavenly Disposition, and shall have Occasions, more than One would wish, to excite Us to it; for Sin and Wickedness abound daily. *Evil Men and Seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.** But let it be Our Care, in the first Place, to continue stedfast in the Things that We have learned, knowing of Whom We have learned them: And in the next Place, to do our best to convince, and reclaim Sinners from their evil Ways, to save their Souls from Death, and thereby to bring Glory to Almighty God, and to make Joy in Heaven over Every Sinner so repenting.

* 2 Tim. iii. 13.



SERMON



S E R M O N II.

*A Sinless Perfection and Security of Salvation, as
Prerogative of a Regenerate State.*

I JOHN III. 9, 10.

Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin, for his Seed remaineth in Him; and He cannot sin, because He is born of God. In this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil: Whosoever doeth not Righteousness, is not of God, neither He that loveth not his Brother.

FOR the right understanding of these Words, it will be proper to note something of the Occasion and Design of them, so far as may be probably learned from Church-History. The Apostle had said, but two Verses before, *Little Children, let no Man deceive you: He that doth Righteousness is righteous, even as He [that is, CHRIST] is righteous.* It seems, there were some at that Time of Day, who presumed to think Themselves *righteous*, and *born of God*, without the *Practice of Holiness*; and They had endeavoured to seduce Others into that strange and absurd, or rather wicked, Perswasion. Therefore said the Apostle, to his own Converts, or Followers, *Little Children, let no Man deceive you*; that is to say, by fair Speeches, plausible Insinuations, or false Colourings. Those Deceivers, probably, were some Disciples of SIMON MAGUS: For That Impostor had taught, that Men are saved by Grace only, without any Regard to good Works.* As if Gospel-Righteousness were no necessary Condition for the enjoying Gospel-Privileges; or as if Men might

* Iren. l. i. c. 20. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. l. i. c. 1. Græc. Annot. ad Bull. Harm. Apost. p. 13, 33. Exam. cen. p. 5.

might be *born of God*, and become *Heirs of Salvation*, independent of *Christian Holiness*, though Scripture is express, that *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.*† In Opposition to such dangerous Principles, the good Apostle asserts, and strongly inculcates, the Necessity of a *pure Heart*, and *Life*, to denominate any Person *good*, and to entitle Him to the Privileges of *Christian Sonship*. *Whoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin*: And a little after, *Whoever doth not Righteousness, is not of God*. He fixes the Point both Ways, to enforce it the more strongly: If a Person *is of God*, He will of course abstain from the Practice of *Sin*: Or, if He *does not*, besides, practise *Righteousness*, performing his bounden Duty, He is *not of God*, but is a *Child of the Devil*. Words so full, and so express, as to bear no Dispute, nor to admit of Evasion. In discoursing farther, I shall endeavour to state and clear the Particulars here following:

- I. To shew, *negatively*, what the Text does *not mean*.
- II. To shew, *positively*, what its *true and full Meaning* is.
- III. To point out the *Practical Use and Improvement* of the whole.

I.

I shall endeavour to shew, *negatively*, what the Text does *not mean*, in Order to prevent Scruples, and to obviate Misconstructions.

1. The Text most undoubtedly concerns *Grown Persons*, and does not *directly* concern *Infants*. Infants are not capable of *doing Righteousness*, though capable of being *born of God* in Baptism: They preserve that *regenerate State*, once entered into, 'till They become guilty of *actual*, and grievous Sin. Of This there can be no Dispute: They are *justified* at the same Time that They are *regenerated*, and are therefore *righteous* in God's Sight; and accordingly They are *interpretatively* included in St. JOHN's Rule, though not *pecially* considered by Him. The Gain-Sayers, whom He opposed, pretended that even *Grown Persons*, not practising *Righteousness*, but living under the Dominion of Sin, were in a State of Salvation notwithstanding. That was the Doctrine which the Apostle here laboured to correct: *Infants* were no Way concerned in it, and so there was no need to make an Exception for Their Case.

2. I must further observe, that the Text does not mean to exclude any Persons from Salvation, who are really *Penitent*, or whose *Hearts* are really *changed*, or *renewed*, and only want

want *Time* to bring forth the *Fruit of good Works*; Such, for instance, as the *Penitent Thief* upon the Cross. Indeed, *Good Works* are justly interpreted to mean either *inward*, or *outward Works*. There are the *inward Works* of sincere *Faith*, humble *Contrition*, *Detestation* of Sin, *Trust* in the divine Mercy, firm *Reliance* on the *Merits* of CHRIST, together with cordial *Resolutions* of a thorough *Amendment*; Works of this Kind transacted *within*, if such a Person should be suddenly taken off, will be interpreted as Works of *Righteousness*, by God who knows the Heart. Therefore This also is a Case which falls within the Equity, or even the *Letter* of the Apostle's Rule, *Ποιών τὴν Δικαιοσύνην*, *He that doeth Righteousness*, or He that *makes Righteousness*, be it *outwardly* or *inwardly*, *He is righteous*. The False Teachers, Whom the Apostle here opposed, required neither *outward* nor *inward Righteousness*, but promised Salvation to their deluded Hearers, without Regard to Either, independent of Both alike. Therefore St. JOHN's Rule may reasonably be understood with a tacit Exception to the Case of *inward Righteousness*, which had Nothing to do with the main Question then in Hand: For, the Question was not about *dying Penitents*, but about Persons living in *Impenitency*, and under the Dominion of Sin.

3. I must add, thirdly, that the Text does not mean to exclude All that are in any Degree *Sinners*, from a State of Salvation; for in some Sense All Men are *Sinners*; and the same Apostle, in the same Epistle, says, *If We say that We have no Sin, We deceive Our Selves, and the Truth is not in Us.** And if *We say, that We have not sinned*, We make CHRIST a Liar, and his Word is not in Us.† St. JOHN does not say, that God's Children *have no Sin*, but that They *do not commit Sin*. The Phrases are somewhat alike, but they are not the same; neither do they bear the same Signification, but widely different. *To have no Sin* means to be altogether *Sinless*, from first to last; which No mere Man ever was, or will be; But *not to commit Sin*, or not to *make Sin*, not to be a *Sin-Maker*, in this Place means only, the forbearing to sin with an high Hand, or abstaining from the *grievous* and *presumptuous* Kind of Sins. The Children of God, as such, are not altogether *Sinless*; but if They have formerly sinned in any grievous Manner, They are truly *Penitent*, and They do so no more; and the Sins which They remain yet subject to, are Sins of *Infirmity*, such as All are in some Degree liable to, and such as are not imputed under a Covenant of Grace,

* 1 John i. 2.

† 1 John i. 10.

Grace. This Distinction of Sins, into Sins of *Presumption*, and Sins of *Infirmity*, (otherwise called Sins of *Daily Incur-sion*) is an old Distinction in the Church, and is abundantly warranted by many Scripture-Texts, which I need not here mention. It is sufficient to have observed, that the Apostle is here to be explained by that Distinction; for it is certain and manifest, that He did not mean to teach that the Children of God, as such, are, or can be, altogether *without Sin*, like as our Blessed Lord Himself was. *There is No mere Man that sinneth not.** *There is not a perfectly just Man upon Earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.†* For, in many Things We offend All.‡ Which is chiefly to be understood of our many Omissions and Failures of Duty, through unavoidable Ignorance, or Infirmity, either forgetting and overlooking some Articles of Duty, or not performing them with all that Care and Exactness which might have been used by Us. But I proceed.

II.

Having observed to you, *negatively*, what the Doctrine of the Text does *not mean*, I am next to shew, *positively*, what it *does mean*. The true and full Meaning is, That the Children of God, considered as Such, do, by the Assistance of God's Grace present with Them, lead a good Life, discharging every Duty incumbent upon Them, with a *conscientious Care* to the utmost of their Ability, and abstaining from *presumptuous and damning Transgressions*. Such were ZACHARIAS and ELISABETH, of Whom It is recorded by St. LUKE, that They were *Both righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord, blameless.*§ That is to say, They lived in so holy, and so exemplary a Manner, as to be both *acceptable to God, and approved of Men*, in St. PAUL's Phrase, on another Occasion;|| or *having always a Conscience void of offence toward God and toward Men.*¶ These are such as our Lord speaks of, under the Name of *just Persons, needing no Repentance;** and *righteous Persons*, whom He came not to call to Repentance,†† that is, to an *entire Change*, but to *Improvement and Increase* in Godliness: Not but that Repentance belongs to *All Men*, in the same Sense as *All Men* are *Sinners*: But as Repentance, in a stricter Sense, means an *entire Change* of Heart and Life towards God; if a Man's Heart was before *set right*, He will not want to be so *changed* in the main, but to be carried on in the same good Way

* 1 Kings viii. 46.

† Chron. vi. 36.

‡ Eccles. vii. 20.

§ James iii. 2.

¶ Luke i. 6.

|| Rom xiv. 12.

¶ Acts xxiv. 16.

** Luke xv. 7.

†† Luke v. 31.

Way He was in, to higher Perfection. Now, to return to the Words of the Text: The Apostle here supposes that the *Children of God* are *righteous, just, and blameless* in such a Sense as I have mentioned, walking in the Ways of God, conscientiously keeping God's Holy Will and Commandments, and not living under the *Dominion of Sin*, or the Power of *evil Habits*. In this Sense, He declares that They *do not commit Sin*, subjoining this Reason, that God's *Seed remaineth in Them*, therefore They do not sin. And He further adds, which is yet a stronger Expression, that They *cannot sin*, because They are *born of God*. How *cannot*? May not *Regenerate* Persons fall into Sin, or fall from Grace, yea and fall *finally*? Yes, certainly They may: All the Scripture-Exhortations to Perseverance or Steadfastness manifestly suppose it; and some Scripture-Texts directly teach it; and even St. PAUL, That Chosen Vessel, did as good as intimate, that He might Himself be in Danger of falling off, when He said; *I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to Others, I My Self should be a Cast-away.** How then must We understand that the Regenerate *cannot sin, cannot fall away*? We may best understand the Words in a qualified Sense, not so as to mean that They *absolutely* cannot, but that They cannot *without great Force and Violence* to their *regenerate Nature*, to their *renewed Frame and Disposition of Mind*, and to that Principle of *Grace* within Them, which powerfully restrains Them from it. So We commonly say of a *good-natured Man*, that He *cannot* do an *hard Thing*; or of a *well-bred Man*, that He *cannot* do an *ungentle Thing*: It would be a *Force* upon his *Nature*, and a *Contradiction* to the *Principle* upon which He *commonly acts and conducts* Himself. In like Manner, but in a higher Degree, a true *Child of God*, or a sincere Disciple of CHRIST, *cannot* allow Himself in *sinful Courses*: His own *Heart* will *reproach* Him warmly if He does, and the *Principle of Grace* within Him will *warn* Him back very strongly, only not *irresistably*: For, the Holy Spirit of God does not so move or over-rule our Wills, as to render us mere *Machines*. Such a qualified Sense of the Words, *can* and *cannot*, is very common in ordinary Discourse, and in all Writings, and particularly in the *Sacred Writings*. I shall take Notice but of one remarkable Instance, namely of JOSEPH, when tempted to commit Sin: *How can I*, says He, *do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?†* thereby intimating, that He *could not* do it: He had more Sense, He had

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* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

† Gen. xxxix. 9.

more Grace, than to do a vile Thing. He had God before his Eyes: He had a prevailing Principle of Religion within. He had an honest and an upright Heart; and while He had, *He could not act wickedly*. In short, a good Man may by degrees grow careless and negligent, secure and thoughtless, and so his Conscience may be laid asleep; the HOLY SPIRIT may thereupon desert Him, and SATAN may enter in: But as soon as this comes to be the Case, He is no longer the good Man He was, no longer a *Child of God*, in St. JOHN's Sense of the Name. Therefore the Apostle's Meaning in the Text is no more than This, That a good Man, *as such*, cannot do a wicked Thing: He must first lose That Principle of Goodness, That *Seed of God* sown in his Heart; He must lose it, I say, by some very blameable Negligence of his own, before he can consent to sin with a high Hand against God. God has no where promised, that his Spirit shall abide with any Man, any longer than while he *watches and prays*. Therefore our Lord says, *Watch and pray*, that ye enter not into Temptation: * And again; *What I say unto You, I say unto All, watch* † But here, perhaps, Some may be bold to object or argue: How can a *Child of God*, Who, as Such, is the Temple of the HOLY SPIRIT, how can He grow *careless*, or *negligent*? Will not That Same Spirit, dwelling in Him, keep Him awake and attentive, exciting, instructing, and assisting Him both to *watch* and to *pray*? For, is it not said, That *the Spirit helpeth our Infirmities*? Are We not told, That *We know not what We should pray for, as We ought*, unless the Spirit it self assist us in it? ‡ It is so said, and all that is said is strictly true: But it is no where said, that the Spirit *does every Thing*, and *We Nothing at all*; for then the Act would not be in any Sense *Ours*, or however not *Ours* in such a Sense as to render it *Virtue* in Us, or to make Us capable of what is properly called *Reward*. The Spirit does *excite*, He does not *compel*: He instructs and assists, He inclines and moves; but by soft Calls and gentle Whispers, such as *may be resisted*, and often *are resisted*; otherwise, how come We to hear of *grieving the Holy Spirit of God*, § and of *quenching the Spirit*? ¶ And if the Spirit were to do *all*, and Man himself *Nothing*, how comes it that St. PAUL exhorts TIMOTHY to *stir up the Gift of God which is in Him*? ¶ An Eloquent FATHER of the Ancient Church illustrates the whole Case by an apt and familiar Comparison: "As Fire
" must have Fewel laid on, from Time to Time, that it
" may

* Matth. xxvi. 41.

† Mark xiii. 37.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.

§ Eph. iv. 30.

¶ 1 Thes. v. 19.

¶ 2 Tim. i. 6.

" may have Something to work upon, and may not go out;
 " so the Grace of God must find Submission and Compli-
 " ance, Alacrity and Readiness of Mind on our Part, for it
 " to thrive upon, and to keep up the Holy Flame of the
 " Spirit." To sum up this Matter in few Words: This is
 certain, that in the *Works of Grace*, the HOLY SPIRIT bears
 a *principal Part*, and Man a *subordinate one*, and Both *concur*
 to the same good Act; so that while the Act is *Ours*, the
Glory of it is entirely *God's*. But it is not for Us, to deter-
 mine precisely the exact Boundaries of the *Divine Operations*,
 so as to be able to say, so much and no more is the *Spirit's*
Share in the Act, and so much *Ours*. It is sufficient, that all
 our good Works are some Way or other, in some Proportion
 or other, the Result of *Grace* and of *Free-will* together:
 And if Any Man falls from That *Grace*, and so falls into
 Sin; the true Account of it is, that while the *Spirit* does all
 that *divine Wisdom* saw proper in that Case, the *Man* was
 wanting with Respect to *His Part*, refusing to be led, or
 taking no Care to *watch* and *pray* with that Fervour and Di-
 ligence, which was reasonably expected of Him. Thus the
Children of God may, by their own *Sloth* and *Supineness*, cease
 to be such, for the Time being, 'till they repent and re-
 cover; or for ever, if They repent not at all: But in the
 mean while, St. JOHN's Doctrine stands firm and unshaken;
 that God's Children, *as such*, or *so abiding*, do not commit
 Sins of a *grievous Kind*: It is a Contradiction to the very
 Principle which They are supposed to be governed by, to
 say that They do. They may lose That Principle, and
 thereupon lose their Sonship also: But while They keep it
 alive and awake, They can no more act against it, than a
 Man can act in any other Case against his *prevailing* or *pre-*
dominant Principle, whatsoever it be. If You could sup-
 pose Him to act against it, It could not then be called, in
 That Instance, his *prevailing* or *ruling* Principle: For, if it
 were, it must have *prevailed* and *ruled*.

III.

Having now done with my first two Heads, intended to
 state and clear St. JOHN's Doctrine in the Text, It remains
 now only, to point out the *Practical Use* and *Improvement* of
 it, in some few pertinent Considerations built upon it.

From hence We may competently perceive, upon what
Terms we stand with Almighty God, and what *Title* We have
 to be upon the List of his domestick Servants, his real and faith-
 ful Children. True *Faith* and *Obedience* are the *Tenure* by
 which

which We must hold; and there is no other Ground whereon We can safely stand. Many Expedients have been thought on whereby to shift off *Duty*, and to secure, if it were possible, the *Reward*. The Prize of our High-calling is great, noble, and infinitely desirable: But the Burden of Duty, the Restraints of Obedience, are found to bear hard upon Flesh and Blood: And how have Mens Wits been at Work, now for 1700 Years together, to find out some one Expedient or other, for the reconciling a bad Life with true Peace of Mind, and with Expectations of Heaven! It would be tedious, perhaps impossible, to recount the several Ways that have been made use of for that Purpose. I shall content My Self with naming one or two, such as *whole Sects* have taken into, passing by innumerable others which private Persons have contrived for Themselves. A *naked Faith* was an old Device: It is particularly confuted by St. JAMES; and more need not be said of it. Some have pleased Themselves with the Thoughts of being among the *Elect*, and thereupon *secure* of *Salvation*: But their Misfortune is, that They can never be *certain* of Their being in the Number of the *Elect*, in their Sense of the Word, but by living a *good Life*, and *persevering* in it, all their Days. St. PAUL understood perfectly how this Matter is; and He says, *We are made Partakers of Christ, if We hold the Beginning of our Confidence steadfast unto the End.** If We hold fast the Confidence and the Rejoicing of the Hope firm unto the End.† Some perhaps may presume to say, We can hold fast our Confidence, our strong Assurance of our own Salvation to the End. But St. PAUL did not mean *vain* Confidence, or *groundless* Assurance, but a *rational* and *well-grounded* Hope, built upon the *Merits* of CHRIST, and the Consciousness of living an *Holy Life*. Therefore in another Chapter, lower down, He varies his Phrase, and says, *We desire that Every One of You do shew the same Diligence to the full Assurance of Hope unto the End: That Ye be not slothful, but Followers of Them, Who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.‡* Confidence will not answer, without Something very solid and substantial to build such Confidence upon.

Many have flattered Themselves, that They have had the *revealing* Evidence of the Spirit, the *Voice* of the Spirit of God, bearing inward Testimony to their Spirits: For, St. PAUL says, *The Spirit it self beareth Witness with Our Spirit, that We are the Children of God.§* But St. PAUL also says, in the same Chapter, that *there is no Condemnation to Them—Who*

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* Heb. iii. 14. † Heb. iii. 6. ‡ Heb. vi. 11. 12. § Rom. viii. 16.

*walk after the Spirit, and Who are led by the Spirit of God.** So that, at length, this *Testimony of the Spirit* resolves entirely into the Certainty We have of our bringing forth the *Fruits of the Spirit*. Strong *Assurance* will signify little; for That may be *groundless*: Fulness of Joy will avail as little, because it may be a *False Joy*, or a *Golden Dream*. Besides that, when St. PAUL told the *Philippians*, that *it was God that worked in Them both to will and to do, of his good Pleasure*, He did not therefore bid Them be *confident* of their Salvation, or full of *Assurance* on that Score: But He bad Them *work out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*.† As much as if He had said, *God is your Helper*, therefore do not *despond*: But then again, because *God is your Helper*, and works with You, therefore behave as becomes You, before the tremendous Majesty, with humble Reverence, with anxious Care and Dread, with the utmost Diligence and ready Compliance, lest, if You should work under such a Guide, in a negligent and careless Manner, altogether unworthy of so Divine a Master, He should at length desert You, and leave You to go on by Your Selves.

Indeed, Divine Wisdom knows Human Frame too well, to give Any of Us *infallible Assurances* of our *Reward*, before We have done our *Work*; lest those very Assurances should make Us *secure and negligent*, and render Us altogether *unable* of being received into those pure and bright Mansions Above. God has told Us plainly, upon what *Terms* He will accept Us, through the Merits of CHRIST; and He leaves Us to discover the rest, as far as We reasonably and honestly may, by comparing Our Own Lives with those Gospel-Terms. This is all, and This is sufficient for a State of Probation: Only, the farther to check vain Presumption, whatever *present Advances* We may have made, We are still left in the Dark as to our *future Behaviour*, and All depends upon our *persevering* unto the End. St. PAUL, as I before hinted, above Twenty Years after his Conversion, still spake so humbly of Himself, as almost to fear, lest He might become a *Cast-away*. Five Years after That, He began to discover some Degrees of *Assurance*, but still supposing Himself not very far from his End. At the very last, which was Five Years later, when He had *fought his good Fight, kept the Faith, and finished his Course*, and was preparing to die a Martyr, Then, and not 'till Then, He thought it became Him (and He had the Revelation of God to warrant Him) to express the strongest Assurances of his High Reward in Heaven.

* Rom. viii. 1, 14.

† Philip. ii. 12, 13.

ven. Let Christians of a much lower Class, learn from thence, to think and speak modestly of their own Case. If They wait for their full and compleat *Assurance*, 'till They are on the other Side the Grave; They will, probably, be the *surer* to find it there, for their speaking and thinking so *humbly* and *modestly* of Themselves here. Comfortable Hopes, along with a Life suitable, are sufficient Encouragement for a good Christian to proceed with: More than That might be *hurtful* to Us, as rather obstructing, than furthering the great Work of Salvation: Not but that God may sometimes, in Cases extraordinary, fill pious Minds, especially if very near their Departure, and when such Indulgence can do no Harm, with joyous Raptures, and super-abundant Assurances: But I speak of what may ordinarily be expected in our Christian Warfare. To conclude—As our Acceptance hereafter depends entirely upon our careful and conscientious Conduct here; so let Every Man take Care to walk warily and circumspectly, and to rise in Assurance in Proportion to his so doing, growing in Grace, and increasing in all virtuous and godly Living, and so at length making his Calling and Election sure.





S E R M O N III.

The Scripture-Doctrine of the *Unprofitableness* of Man's *best Performances*, an Argument against *Spiritual Pride*; yet no Excuse for *Slackness* in good Works and Christian Obedience.

LUKE XVII. 10.

So likewise Ye, when Ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded You, say, We are unprofitable Servants: We have done That which was our Duty to do.

THESE Words are the Conclusion of a Parable, a Kind of Moral subjoined to it, to signify the Use and Application of it. Our Blessed Lord had put the Case of a labouring Servant coming Home from the Field, to wait upon his Master at the Table, performing that *additional Service* after his other Labours of the Day; providing a Supper for his Master, in the first Place, and attending Him patiently all the Time, and after That, content to provide for Himself. After our Lord had thus represented the Case, He makes his Reflections upon it, in these Words: *Doth He* (that is, the Master) *thank that Servant, because He did the Things that were commanded him? I trow not: I suppose not.* So likewise Ye, with Regard to your Heavenly Master, *when Ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you*, it will become, it will behove You to say; *We are unprofitable Servants; We have only done That which it was our bounden Duty to do.* Therefore We deserve no Thanks from Him, nor have any strict Claim to a Reward from Him: But it is sufficient if our Service is but accepted; for to have neglected it where it was due, would have deserved Stripes. This I take to be the general Sense

Sense and Purport of the Text: And the main Design of it was, to curb and keep down all *Spiritual Pride* and *Self-assertings*, with respect to God; and to teach Men *Modesty* and *true Humility*. Presume not to article strictly with Him, or to make any proud *Demands* upon Him. *Boast* not before Him of any, even your *best* Services, and reckon not at all upon your *own Deservings*. Do as He has commanded You to do, to the utmost of your Power, assisted by his Spirit (For, without That, you are not fit to be called his Servants at all, but rather to be discarded as none of his :) But after You have done all, and all reasonably well, still remember how insignificant You are in Comparison, and how high God is; and therefore make no unbecoming *Claims* upon Him, because of your *Services* (poor enough at the best;) but chuse rather to refer all to his Favour and Goodness, than to your *own Deservings*. In discoursing farther, I shall endeavour,

I. To explain What the Phrase or Title of *unprofitable Servants* here strictly means.

II. To shew how much it concerns such Servants, to make their Humble Acknowledgements before God, of the *Worthlessness* of all their *Services*.

III. To observe, that such *Acknowledgments* must not however be made an *Excuse* or Colour for any culpable *Slackness* in our *bounden Duties*, or for pleading any *Exemption* or *Discharge* from using all possible *Diligence* in our Christian Calling, to perform all that is commanded Us.

I.

I propose to explain What the Phrase or Title of *unprofitable Servants* here strictly means. There is the more Need of explaining it, because it is used but *twice besides* in the New Testament; and in a Sense which perhaps will not so conveniently suit the Place which We are now upon. We first find it in St. MATTHEW, where our Lord says, after delivering the Parable of the Talents, *Cast the unprofitable Servant into outer Darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.** Here, *unprofitable Servant* means the same with a *wicked or profligate Servant*; which is too *hard* a Sense for our Lord to have intended in the present Text, where He applies it to his own true and sincere Disciples. In the Epistle

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* Matt. xxv. 30.

tle to the *Romans*, in a Quotation there taken from the fourteenth *Pſalm*, we read, *They are all gone out of the Way, They are together become unprofitable; there is None doth good, no not One**. This appears to be a Description of very ill Men, of abandon'd Libertines: Accordingly, in the *Pſalm* it ſelf, in the Old Tranſlation, the Stile runs, *They are corrupt and become abominable*; and according to the New Tranſlation, *They are all gone aſide, They are all together become filthy*†. The Words, *abominable* and *filthy*, are there made to answer what in *Romans* is rendred *unprofitable*. And That, again, is too hard a Senſe to put upon the Word *unprofitable* in the Text We are now upon: Therefore We muſt look out for ſome ſofter and milder Conſtruction, in this ſingle Place, to make the Context answer.

It may be conſider'd, that No Man can, by any Services of His, be *profitable* to God, Who is *All-ſufficient*, and is above needing any Benefit, or receiving any real Advantage§. But then it may be ſaid that neither Man, nor Angel, nor Arch-angel, nor any Creature whatever can indeed be *profitable* to God: And what great Matter were it for *lapsed* Men to profeſs Themſelves *unprofitable Servants* in ſuch a Senſe only, as All the Company of Heaven muſt for ever profeſs the ſame? This appears to be a Senſe as much too *high* for the Phraſe in the Text, as the Other was too *hard* and ſevere. Let Us therefore pitch upon ſome *middle* Meaning, ſuch as may neither be too degrading for a ſincere Chriſtian to own, nor yet too high or exalted for Man in a fallen State. Had our Firſt Parents preſerved their Innocence entire to the laſt, yet They would have been but *unprofitable Servants* after all, as bringing no *Proſit* to God. *Lapsed* Men are *unprofitable* in a more diſparaging Senſe than That, being All of them *Sinners*. Some may think that the Text it ſelf explains the Meaning of the Title, by the Words, *When Ye ſhall have done all Thoſe Things, which are commanded You*; and again, *We have done That which was our Duty to do*. But what Man is there that *finneſh not*? or, what Man ever perform'd (CHRIST only excepted) *all that his Duty* required of Him? The Text neither ſays, nor ſuppoſes, that Any Man has, or ever will, do all that is commanded Him. It ſuppoſes only, that in ſome particular Caſes Men may, and will, do all that is required of Them in *theſe Caſes* or Inſtances, like as the *Servant* in the *Parable* is ſuppoſed to have done in providing his Maſter a Supper, and then waiting upon Him till

* Rom. iii. 12.

† Pſal. xiv. 3.

§ Job xxii. 2, 3. xxxv. 7.

Pſal. xvi. 2.

*till the Supper was ended. Thus may good Men punctually perform all that was required of Them in some particular Affairs, while They fail in other Matters, more or less, through human Frailties. Had our First Parents, through the Grace of the Spirit (for They could not without) continued *upright*, They could not indeed have *profited* the Divine Majesty, nor have claimed a *Reward* as of *Debt*: But This They could have demanded (because it would but have been doing Them Justice) to be pronounced *innocent*; and They might have claimed *Impunity*, because a *righteous Judge* cannot condemn the *Guiltless*. Now, *lapsed Man* cannot demand even so far, being that He is *guilty*, and therefore liable to *Blame*, liable also to *Penalty*: So that, upon the Whole, when Any, even the Best of fallen Men, profess Themselves to be *unprofitable Servants* of God, They may reasonably be supposed to mean, that They are *Creatures* Who can make no beneficial Returns, no proper *Requitals* to their Creator; that They are *Creatures* of a *low Order*, comparatively; human, mortal *Creatures*, Who can neither *will*, nor do, any Thing without the Aids of Divine Grace; and further, that They are also *Sinners*, Who, instead of *meriting* a *Reward*, or claiming it as a *Debt*, cannot so much as claim *Impunity*, or *Glory* in God's Sight, but must be content to sue to Him in the humble *petitionary* Form for *Reward*, for *Grace*, and even for *Impunity*, referring all to God's *Mercy* and *Goodness*, and That also *purchased* for Them by the alone *Merits* of CHRIST JESUS.

II.

I proceed now, *Secondly*, to consider how much it concerns, and how fitly it becomes, such *unprofitable Servants* to make their humble Acknowledgments before God, of the *Worthlessness* of all Their Services; *worthless*, I mean, with respect to God, not otherwise: For, they are not *worthless* with respect to *Angels*, or to *other Men*; more especially not to our *own Souls*, but That, by the Way, only to prevent Mistakes.

Now, to understand the more clearly, how much it concerns Us, and how indispensably necessary it is to make such Humble Acknowledgments; We are to consider the infinite Holiness and Purity of that tremendous Deity with Whom We have to do; that He is *of purer Eyes than to behold Evil*, or to look favourably upon *Iniquity**; that his *Angels* He hath charged with *Folly*†; and that even the *Heavens* are not clean in his Sight‡. What is Man then, that He should be clean?

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and

* Habbak, i. 13.

† Job iv. 18.

‡ Job xv. 15. xxv. 5.

and He who is born of a Woman, that He should be righteous? Now, tho' God's Goodness disposes Him always to be as merciful to Sinners, as the Reasons of Government, or the Nature of Things permits, yet the Honour and Dignity of his unspotted Holiness and Purity must be kept up, in the Sight both of Men and Angels. Therefore when God was so kind to his own People of *Israel*, He took particular Care to have it often inculcated, that it was not for their *Righteousness* that He so highly favoured Them,† but upon other Accounts; and particularly for his *own Name's Sake*.‡

One Thing We know, that if our First Parents had remained *sinless*, God could, consistently with the Honour of his Purity, have admitted Them, as *righteous* in Themselves, to Life Eternal. But since the Fall, the Rule has been (according to the Divine Counsels, founded on unerring Truth) that *No Man* living is in Himself *righteous*, nor can be received as *righteous*, but in and through the *Merits* of a Divine Mediator, his only *Son*, and our only *Redeemer*, CHRIST JESUS our Lord. So stands the Case: And God will have it acknowledged by the Best of Us, for the Honour of his high Name, that We are, as to Our Selves, *unprofitable Servants*, and *Sinners*, and can no otherwise be *justified* in his Sight, or permitted to appear before Him, but in the Lustre which We borrow from his *beloved Son*, in *Whom* only He is *well pleased*. With this Key, You may very easily understand all that St. PAUL meant (in two of his Epistles especially, *viz.* to the *Romans*, and *Galatians*) by insisting so strongly upon *Justification by Faith*. There were at that Time *Pagans*, in great Numbers, Who valued Themselves much upon their *Exalted Virtues* (for so their Pride perswaded Them) and upon their good *moral Lives*; conceiving that They had no *Need* of CHRIST, and so They would not embrace the Gospel. There were also Multitudes of *Jews* (*Pharisees* especially) Who were even prouder in that Point than the *Pagans*, strongly conceited of their spiritual Improvements and Privileges, as if They had known no *Sin*, nor had any *Need* of *Pardon*. Against both those Kinds of Men the Apostle disputed with great Strength and Clearness, in Order to beat down their Vanity, and to convince Them of the absolute Necessity of looking out for some *better Righteousness* than their *own*, the *Righteousness* that rests in the *meritorious Atonement* made by CHRIST JESUS. That was to be received by *Faith*; that is to say, by a submissive and humble *Acknowledgment* of their

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* Job. xv. 14. † Kings viii. 46.
Prov. xx. 9. Eccles. vii. 20.
‡ John i. 8.

† Deut. ix. 6. ‡ Isa. xliii. 25.
xlviii. 9. Ezek. xx. 9, 14, 23.
44.

Own Unprofitableness, and Insufficiency as to Salvation, and by reposing their Whole Trust and Confidence in the Gospel-Covenant of Grace, in What CHRIST had done and suffered for Them. This is The *Justification by Faith*, in the Stile of that great Apostle. For Faith in this Case, is a *Virtual Acknowledgment* of our own Sinfulness, and of God's unspotted Purity; and withal, a kind of *Silent Prayer* sent up to the Divine Majesty, beseeching Him to admit Us, not for any *Protections of our own*, not for our own *Services* (which at the best are too weak and imperfect to stand before Him, or abide His strict Scrutiny) but for the *Sake of CHRIST JESUS only*, and out of His own *Free Grace* and Mercy towards Us. Such *Acknowledgment* being made on our Part, and such *Obedience* also performed as is required by that *Covenant of Grace*, which We rest our Selves upon, then may the Divine Majesty, without any Impeachment of his Holiness, admit Us into Favour, and own Us for his Servants. For, then it cannot be said, that He receives Sinners as Sinners, but He receives Them as washed and purified in the Blood of the Lamb: Yea, as perfectly righteous; not in Themselves, but in CHRIST the righteous; who by His All-prevailing Atonement hath merited This for All sincere and penitent Offenders, that They shall be treated as if They were perfectly Righteous, and shall be recompensed accordingly.

ABRAHAM, of ancient Time, to whom the Gospel was preached*, and who before-hand saw CHRIST's Day, and was glad†; He was justified by That Kind of Faith: And so was DAVID, and the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets; and after Them, the Apostles, and all good Christians. This is a sober Truth, which ought deeply to be imprinted in every ones Mind, in Opposition to all proud Claims: And so much the rather, because there are at this Day, even under This Gospel-Sunshine, Some that pretend to Merit, and Works of Super-errogation; as if They were not Sinners, or needed no Pardon; Some that presume to think and say, that God is obliged in Justice, or in Goodness, to accept of Them, without any Amendment, or, however, without Atonement; Some that Ascribe so much to Free-Will, as to exclude the Need, or Use of Divine Grace; Some conceive so Highly of Natural Religion, and of Virtues merely Moral, as to despise that Righteousness which the Gospel teaches: And some likewise there are, who fear not to boast even of Sinless Perfection, and who, for that Reason, forbear to pray for Forgiveness of God. Now, St. PAUL's Doctrine concerning Justification

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* Gal. iii. 8.

† John viii. 56.

by *Faith*, is a standing Evidence against all such *proud Boasters*, confuting their big Pretensions, and beating down their assuming Claims. It is fatal Oversight, for a Man not to consider well beforehand, what to rest His Salvation upon, or what chiefly to trust to, before the High Tribunal. Come We before God, in the Way of *humble Petition*, or in the Way of *strict Claim*? Stand We upon *our own Righteousness*, or upon the *Merits of CHRIST*? Seek We to be judged by the *Letter of the Law*, or by indulgent Favour, and a *Covenant of Grace*? In a Word, Stand We upon *our perfect Innocence*, or upon the *tender Mercy* of the Judge? St. PAUL has directed Us how to move in this Case, how to form Our Plea, and what Course to take: Move by *Faith* and *Trust* in the *Merits of CHRIST JESUS*: Drop your Plea of *Works*, because there is a Flaw in it, and there is no abiding by it; for We have All sinned, more or less, and God is of purer Eyes than to accept of any Thing in that Way, short of *Perfection*. But if you sue to the Throne of Grace by *Faith* in *CHRIST's Blood*, that is the same Thing with dropping all Plea from your *own Deservings*, and glorying in Nothing, *saves only in the Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST**. That is the Method, the only true Method, whereby to escape Punishment, and to arrive at Heaven and Happiness. Make your humble *Acknowledgments* of the Need You have of a Saviour, and rest your Salvation upon *Him*; and then the Divine Majesty can, with a Salvo to His strict Justice and Holiness, have Mercy upon You, while it is by *his Interest*, and upon *his Account*, not upon *your Own*. So much for that Article.

III.

I proceed now, Thirdly and Lastly, to observe, that such humble Acknowledgments as I have been here mentioning, must not however be so understood as to afford any *Excuse* or Colour for *Slackness* in our *bounden Duties*; or for pleading any *Exemption* or *Discharge* from true *christian Obedience*: For, what if St. PAUL directs Us to apply to God by *Faith*? Doth not the same St. PAUL tell us, that it must be a *Faith which worketh by Love*?† And what if He advises Us not to insist upon our *Works* as *perfect*, nor to stand upon That Plea, in Opposition to a better; yet does He not also tell Us, that We are created in *CHRIST JESUS unto good Works*?‡ and that the *End of the Commandment is Charity*?§ It is right, and our bounden

* Gal. vi. 14.

§ Ephes. ii. 10.

† Gal. v. 6.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 5.

bounden Duty, to renounce all *Claims*, and *strict Demands*, while We stand before God, and to throw Our selves entirely upon a *Covenant of Grace*: But still that very *Covenant of Grace* has several *Reserves* and *Exceptions* in it, to exclude all *impenitent* Offenders, and carries its own *Conditions* along with it; which are many, but are all summ'd in these Two, humble well-grounded *Faith*, and a *sincere*, though imperfect, *Obedience*.

There were some foolish Persons in the Days of the Apostles, who having heard, very probably, of St. PAUL's Doctrine of *Justification by Faith*, and by *Grace*, laid hold of it as an Handle, or Colour for throwing off *Good Works*, and *Christian Obedience*. Any Handle will serve, where either the Judgment is exceeding *weak*, or corrupt Inclination exceeding *strong*: Otherwise, one might justly wonder, how so wild a Thought could have possessed any Man that should call Himself a Christian. However, St. JAMES took Care, in few, but very expressive Words, to obviate Those *Loose Principles*, thereby to prevent the Deception of the ignorant and undiscerning.* St. PAUL had before determined the *general* and *previous* Question, about the right *Method* of applying to God, and the *Plea* that would be safest to stand upon, giving it on the Side of *humble Faith*, against all *proud Claims* from our own *Performances*: And now St. JAMES determines a *second* Question, about the *true* and *full import* of that *Plea* of *Faith*, evidently demonstrating that That very *Plea* of *Faith* is so far from excluding *Christian Obedience*, that it *necessarily takes it in*, and cannot be understood without it. For, *Faith* without *Obedience* is but a *dead Faith*, or in Effect, no Faith at all. ABRAHAM's Faith was a lively and *working Faith*, exerting itself, as Opportunities offered, in all Kinds of *Virtues* and *Graces*, in every good Word and *Work*. Such must every Man's *Faith* be, if He hopes to be *justified* by it here, or *saved* by it hereafter.

Perhaps, what I have hinted of the *two several Questions*, decided by the *two Apostles*, may be made a little plainer, by an easy and familiar Example. Imagine a *Criminal* going to be tried for his Life. It is proposed to Him, in that Case, whether to stand upon *strict Law*, and his own perfect *Innocence*, or to plead some *Act of Grace*, some *Act of Indemnity*. He deliberates upon it, as the *first* Question, and at length comes into the *Plea of Grace*, as his safest *Plea*: This is doing What St. PAUL advised in another Case.

After That, another Question comes on, very distinct from the former; viz. What are the *Conditions* of That very *Act* of

* James ii. 14—26.

Grace which the Criminal had submitted to, and resolved to abide by? This the Lawyers determine upon the Trial, and upon That depends the *Final Issue* of the Cause. In like Manner, after St. PAUL's Decision of the *previous Question* about Pleading the A& of Grace, St. JAMES comes in to shew what *Conditions* that A& contains.

Now, the *practical Conclusion* from all that has been here said, is, to guard the more carefully against *two very dangerous Extremes*, which Some or Other have, in all Ages, unhappily fallen into, and to keep the *middle Path*, the plain and even Road, where You may be safe, not turning aside, either to the *Right Hand*, or to the *Left*.*

If you come before God, full of Your *Own Selves*, reckoning upon your *own Deservings*, trusting in Your *Own Holiness*, or *Righteousness*, and not humbling Your Selves as *Sinners*, and *unprofitable Servants*, or not resting your Salvation upon the rich *Mercy of God*, and the all-prevailing *Atonement* made by the Blood of Christ, then You are *proud, knowing*, Nothing, or Nothing considerable; having no right Knowledge either of your own *Frailties*, *Failings* and *Omissions*, or of God's all-searching Eye, and his tremendous Justice, were He once to be extreme to mark whatever has been done amiss, and to exact it of Us.

If, on the other Hand, (considering how mean and worthless, in the Sight of God, even Our best Services are, and that all Our Hope and Comfort lie solely in *his Mercy* and *Christ's Merits*) You should thereupon neglect to cleanse your Hands, and purify your Hearts (as far as by God's Grace You may) or should grow *slack and careless* in Christian *Duties*; fainting by the Way, and not persevering to the End, but presuming upon God's *Mercy* to save You, though You live and die in your *Sins*; then You run into the other Extreme, not less pernicious than the former.

What then is the Way to take into, and pursue, so as not to miscarry here, or there? The Way is to aspire to *Righteousness* and true *Holiness*, with all Your Might, and not to be *proud* of it, when You have done. Think it *worthless* in the Sight of God, and infinitely below his *Acceptance*, were it not for the *Merits of CHRIST*: But still remember, that it is as much worth to You as Heaven is worth, because *without such Holiness, no Man shall see the LORD*.†

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* Prov. iv. 27.

† Heb. xii. 14.

To conclude: Be as ambitious of leading a *good Life*, as if You were sure even to *merit* by it: At the same Time be as *humble* before God, as the Great St. PAUL was, Who besides keeping the Faith, after He had done perhaps more in the Way of *Good Works* than any mere Man had done before Him, yet summ'd up his own Life and Character in a very few, and very humbling Words, that *He was Nothing*†. He remembered that *God was All*; in whom We live and move, and have our Being§.

† 2 Cor. xii. 11.

§ Acts xvii. 28.





S E R M O N IV.

The Care required in *chusing* our Religious Principles, and the Steadiness in *retaining* them when so chosen, *stated and clear'd*.

I THESS. V. 21.

Prove all Things: Hold fast That which is good.

THE Text contains two very weighty and important Precepts, which have a near Relation to each other; and which may well deserve both to be rightly understood, and carefully retain'd by All.

The first is, to *prove, try, or examine all Things* (proposed as of any Consequence to our Belief and Practice) that so We may discern what is really good: The next is, to close in with it heartily as soon as found, and firmly to *adhere* to it. The Design of which Precepts is to caution us against two pernicious *Extremes*, which many unthinking Persons are prone to run into: One is the taking Opinions *upon Trust* from Others, without ever *examining* or considering What, or Why; the Other is, being too *unsettled* and *irresolute* even *after Examination*, not being able, after a wise Choice, to *fix* and *abide* by it. It is hard to say which of the two *Extremes* is the most unreasonable; whether the being *too credulous* in *receiving* any Thing, or every Thing *without Distinction*; or the *not receiving* and *retaining* What upon due *Examination* well *deserves* it. *Credulity* on one Hand, or *Unsteadiness* on the other, are *equally dangerous*: Both contributing to multiply Mistakes, and to confound all Distinction of *True* and *False*, *Good* and *Evil*. The Way to prevent both is, first, to *examine* into any Opinion or Doctrine propounded to us, in
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order to direct or regulate our *Choice*; and then, after We have made a *wise Choice*, to hold to it resolutely and unalterably, in order to reap the full Benefits of it. We must indeed be cautious in the *Choice* of our Principles, as in the *Choice* of our Friends, not admitting them as such 'till they have been well approved: But when They have been once well chosen, We must be constant to them, and never lightly part with them. My Design then is, in my following Discourse, to recommend two Things to our more especial Notice;

I. Care and Discretion in chusing.—*Prove all Things; and,*

II. Firmness and Steadiness in retaining.—*Hold fast That which is good.*

I.

To begin with the *first*, namely, the Precept to *prove all Things*. Here it will be proper to consider the *Persons* to whom This Precept belongs; The *Rule* whereby they are to proceed; and the *Qualifications* necessary to a right Performance thereof.

I. The *Persons*. And here I must remark, that the Precept is not given to the *Guides* and *Pastors* only (though They may indeed be conceived principally concerned in it) but to *Christians at large*. It is to the *Church* of the *Thessalonians*, and so to every *Church*, and not to the *Pastors* only, that the Advice is directed: It is to as Many as are obliged to *hold fast That which is good*; therefore most certainly to *All*; both *Clergy* and *People*; only in such Proportion and Degree, as their several Stations, Capacities, Abilities, or Opportunities, respectively, may permit. To This agree Those other Precepts of like Kind, recommended in holy Scripture, to *Christians at large*; To try the *Spirits whether they are of God*.* To examine *Themselves whether they be in the Faith*, and to prove their *Own Selves*.† To be ready to give a Reason of the *Hope that is in Them*,|| and the like. Accordingly the *Bereans* are commended for their ingenuous Freedom, in examining before They gave their Assent even to the *Apostle's Doctrine*: *Searching the Scriptures, whether Those Things were so*.§ Vain therefore are the Pretences of the *Romish Bigots*, for confining the Precept to the *Clergy* only, excluding the *Laity* without Distinction from the Duty, or Privilege of examining and judging for Themselves. It is the Right and Duty of *All Persons*, to believe

* 1 John i. † 2 Cor. xiii. 5. || 1 Pet. iii. 15. § Acts xvii. 11.

believe no farther than They have *Reasons*, and to look *Themselves* (as far as They are able) into the *Strength* and *Force* of those *Reasons*, before They give their Assent; or however before They fix and *abide* by it. Neither is This peculiar to Us as *Christians*; but it concerns Us as *Men*. It is one of the *Natural Rights* of Mankind, founded in the very Nature of Things, and necessarily resulting from their being made *rational* Creatures. No Man can be bound to follow Others *blindly*, who has Faculties given Him to discern between *True* and *False*, between *Good* and *Evil*. His own Judgment and Conscience, and not *Another's*, is the *immediate* Guide of his Faith, and Practice; which He must give Account of at the great Day. It is therefore his Duty, and his Business to inform Himself, as carefully as He can: And then, and there only, to trust to *Other* Mens Eyes, where He cannot see clearly with his *own*. And even in these Cases, He is still to judge for Himself, as reasonably as He can, Who or What Persons are to be taken for his *Guides*, or *Instructors*, upon the best and most impartial Judgment He is able to make of their *Authority*, *Integrity*, or *Abilities*. We are None of Us able to examine particularly into the whole Compass and Extent of Things: Something there must be of implicit Faith in Other Men's Labours. There are very few Persons but Who *must*, or Who *will* take some Things upon Trust; wanting either *Ability* or *Leisure* to run through all the Parts of Enquiry, and to search every Thing to the Bottom. But so far as Any Man is *qualified*, and furnish'd with *Leisure* and *Opportunity* for it, so far He ought to *search for Himself*: And as to the rest, He is still to judge, as He will answer it at the Great Day, whose *Report*, or whose *Judgment*, He may most safely rely on; in Matters beyond his Reach or Capacity. Very *able Divines* will, in many Things, rely upon the Report or Judgment of professed *Linguists*, *Critics*, or *Grammarians*: The *Younger* and *less-furnished Divines* will very much confide in the *older* and *more Learned*: The *Common People* will, in many Things, trust to their immediate and proper *Guides*: And, perhaps, the very Illiterate and Ignorant will much rely upon the Judgment of Any (be They Clergy or Laity) Whom They take to be *wiser* and *more knowing* than Themselves; or of whose *Integrity* or *Friendship* towards Them They have no Reason to doubt. We see then, that in the very Nature of the Thing, a great deal must, and will be taken upon *Trust* from Others; and That more or less, according to the great Variety there is of Mens *Abilities*, *Opportunities*, *Qualifications*,
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and *Circumstances* : So that the Precept, to *prove all Things*, comes at length to This ; to examine into all Things, *directly*, so far as *We* can do it ; and where *We* cannot, there to examine *whose Learning*, *whose Integrity*, and *whose Judgment* may be most safely trusted for the rest : For the Purpose. — The *Bulk of common Christians* must in a great Measure depend upon the Integrity and Ability of *Others*, as to the *Authority* and *Divinity* of the Sacred Canon, the *Uncorruptness* of the *Copies*, the *Faithfulness* of the *Translation*, and the *Construction* of some of the more difficult Texts. These Things supposed, They may Themselves competently judge, from Scripture it self, of the most Important or Fundamental Points of Faith or Practice. In plain and common Cases, Ordinary Capacities may examine and judge for Themselves : And They ought to do so, for the Reasons before hinted. They may judge for Themselves *what Religion* They ought to be of, and *what Church* to unite with, and *what Doctrines* of that Church They are to receive, or not to receive ; only paying this reasonable and just Deference to the united Sense and Verdict of Synods or Councils, as not to *oppose* it, however not *publicly*, before it be *understood* ; nor to set up their own *private Opinion* against the *public Sense* of the Church, before They have carefully examined the Case, and have well considered the Strength and Force of those Reasons upon which the *public Decisions* were founded. Under these *Restrictions* and *Limitations*, a *Liberty of private Judgment* should be *allowed to All*, as being the common and undoubted *Right* of all, whether considered as *Christians*, or as *Men*. I come now,

2. To consider the *Rule* by which They are to proceed in the Exercise of this *Right* or *Duty*, of *proving all Things*. The most *General* and *Comprehensive Rule*, in which all other *Rules* centre and terminate, is the Rule of *right Reason*. Whatever, upon the best and last Enquiry, appears to be *most reasonable*, That *We* are to receive, and embrace : And What appears *otherwise*, *We* are to reject. This is a Rule so certain, and so indisputable (when rightly understood) that it is supposed in all Debates, and seems to be equally allowed on all Hands, whether by arguing for, or against it. For What do Men mean by *arguing* at all either Way, but to make *Reason* Umpire in the Question, and, tacitly at least, to acknowledge, that the *best Reasons* ought ever to prevail in it. There are indeed two Kinds of Men, who seem to differ from Us in this Article : One advises to resign up our *Reason* to the Dictates of a pretended *infallible Chair* ; the Other
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would obtrude their *own Dreams* upon us for *divine Oracles*; resolving all into I know not what *secret Dictates* or *Impulses* of the *Spirit*. But the wild Inconsistency of such Pretences is alone sufficient to destroy them: For, either They must give us *Reasons* for What They pretend, and then They plainly *suppose* the very Thing which They deny, making every Man a Judge for Himself of the Force and Strength of those *Reasons*; and how far He may, or may not resign Himself up to them: Or, if They give *no Reasons*, nor pretend any, there cannot be a surer Token of the *Weakness* of their Plea, and of their *betraying* the very Cause which They are labouring to defend. They are used to plead that Human Reason is *weak, blind, and fallible*; liable to sundry *Mistakes*; a very *dangerous* Guide in Matters of Religion; fruitful of *Heresies, Schisms*, and what not. Be it so: Yet how know They but that, in *This* very Argument whereby They would persuade Us to *lay aside Reason*, Reason may be as *blind, weak, and treacherous*, as in any other? If, therefore, there be any Force in their Argument, it must necessarily destroy it self; proving the quite contrary to What it pretends, or proving Nothing. Let *Reason* be supposed ever so blind and fallible; yet, blind as it is, We must be content to submit to it, or to something *blinder*; namely, to *Humour, or Fancy, or Passion, or the Prejudices* of Education. But after all, there is no such Danger as some pretend from the Use of *Reason* in Matters of Religion, but very much rather in the Disuse of it. It is no Part of Religion to lay aside the Use of our Reason: For, besides the Inconsistency of it with a rational Nature, to pretend to unmake the *Man*, in order to make the *Christian*; there is this farther Absurdity in it, that to discard *Reason* in such a Sense, is to discard *Faith* too, which is *ultimately* built upon *Reason*: For We ought always to have a *Reason* for What We believe: And without This, it would not be *true Faith*, but *Presumption* rather, or *blind Credulity*. Faith is itself an *Act of Reason*, as really and truly as any other *Assent* founded upon *Natural Principles*. For Example, We believe such a Doctrine, *because* We find it in the *Scriptures*; We believe the *Scriptures*, *because* They speak the Mind and Will of God; We believe They do so, *because* They have been *proved* to carry with them all possible Marks, outward and inward, of a *Divine Authority*, which a wise and good God would never suffer to be set to any *Imposition*, to lead Mankind into an *inevitable Error*; So that if God be true and just, that is, if there be a God, our Faith is *well grounded*. And, now, why should not an Assent, thus founded upon the *Nature and Reason of Things*, be looked upon as an *Act of Reason*, as well as any *Demonstration* drawn from undoubted Axioms, or first Principles?

ciples? Is there then *no Difference*, may Some ask, between *Faith* and *Science*? Yes, certainly there is; but They do not so differ, as if One were the *Work of Reason*, and the Other *not*: Both are the *Work of Reason*, only with This Difference, that in *Matters of Science*, our Assent is founded on *intrinsic Evidence*, or the *Nature of the Thing* assented to; while in *Matters of Faith*, our Assent is founded on *extrinsic Evidence*, the *Authority of the Revealer*. It may be ask'd then, Are the *Articles of Faith* as *certain*, and as *demonstrable*, as *Matters of Science*? I answer, that thus far, *Whatever God reveals is true*, is as clear and *self-evident* a Principle as any *Maxim* in *Science*; and *Whatever* has a *necessary Connexion* with that Principle, or is *deducible* from it, is strictly and properly *demonstrable*. But whether We have that *Certainty*, that such a Proposition is *revealed*, and that We *understand it rightly* (Both which must be supposed in our Assent to it) is more disputable; and therefore it is, that *Matters of Faith* generally fall short of *Scientifical Demonstration*. But still our Assent, in either Case, is wrought out by *Reason*; by *demonstrative Reasons*, where the Case is *demonstrable*; by *probable ones*, where *probable*; and in *Both*, our Assent is an *Act of Reason*. If it be said farther, that *Faith* is built upon *Testimony*, and therefore not upon *Reason*; it is to be observed, that *Testimony*, barely considered as such, is not the *Ground of Faith*, but rather the *Means of conveying it*: For the *Reasons* why We think the *Testifier* could not, or would not *deceive Us*, *These* are what We properly build our *Faith* upon: So that an Assent, founded upon *Testimony*, is as properly the *Result of Reason*, if it has any just Ground at all, as any other Assent whatsoever. From This Account it may appear, how little Service can be done to *Faith*, by crying down *Reason*, rightly understood. For, whatever tends to weaken the Evidence of *Reason*, must so far tend to weaken *Faith* too, which is built upon it; And as it must necessarily lead to *Scepticism*, in *Natural Truths*; so must it also lead to *Infidelity*, in *Religion*. *Reason* and *Faith* therefore are by no Means *opposite*, but are *assistent* to, and *perfective* of Each Other. It is the *Strength and Glory* of the *best Religion*, to have always the *best Reasons* to go along with it. Never Any Man revolted from the *true Faith*, but He revolted as much from *right Reason*, and abandon'd *Both* at the same Time. He certainly either laid down *false Principles*, or form'd *false Conclusions* from true Ones, and was in Reality as weak a *Reasoner* as He was a *Christian*. True Religion loves to be *examin'd* by the nicest *Reason*, can abide the *Trial*, and invites all Persons to lay

aside *Prejudice, Pride, Lusts, Passions, and vile Affections*, and to put the Matter upon a *fair Hearing* at the Bar of *un-bias'd and impartial Reason*. And This, give me leave to say, ever has been, and will be the Glory and Triumph of our excellent Religion, that Her Adversaries, with all their *vain Pretences to Reason*, have betrayed the greatest *Want* of it, and have never been able either to answer *her* Arguments, or to defend *their own*. Let *Reason* then be our *Rule* for *proving all Things*; and let That be received as *most Credible*, which stands upon the *strongest and clearest Reasons*.

The Use, and Application of This Rule, is of wide Compass and vast Extent, in Matters of Religion; and is either *General* or *Special*.

First, General, in directing Us how to find out, among the many Pretenders, *which* is the *true and right Religion*; whether *Pagan, Jewish, Mahometan, or Christian*; or, supposing the *Christian* to be (as it undoubtedly is) the best of the Four, then, among the several *Seets and Parties* of Christians, *which* of them is preferable: Whether the *Greek Church* or the *Roman*, whether of *England or Geneva*, whether of *Luther* or of *Calvin*, and so on. Here our *Reason* has a large Field to move in, in Order to direct and guide Us, *what Religion* to be of, or *what Church* to join Our Selves to.

Secondly, The Use of Reason is more *Special*, in stating and clearing the *particular Doctrines* of Christianity. Christians of all Sorts, however divided in Opinions, yet plead the same Scriptures commonly in Defence of them; Each abounding in their *own Sense*, and resolutely adhering to their *own Construction, or Interpretation*. And what can give Us any Light, or what can lead Us to the *Truth* among the contending Parties, but the laying together and considering, with all Sincerity and Impartiality, the *Reasons* offered here, or there, respectively? This must be the Way to discover What is at length *really Scriptural*, and What *not*: And thus it is that We may be able to distinguish the vain Fancies and Comments of Men, from the true Mind and Will of God. Here the Office of *Reason* is various and manifold, according as *Scripture*, or the Matters it treats of, are *more or less* clear and positive.

In some Points, *Scripture* is *very plain* and clear, and the *Reason* of the Thing too: As in the *moral Doctrines* of Christianity. In such a Case, Reason proceeds upon *double Evidence, extrinsic and intrinsic*, either of which might stand single, and be a sufficient Proof of the Thing. But
Both.

Both together make it the more *indisputable*; and our Assent rests fast and firm upon a *twofold* Foundation.

Sometimes *Scripture* is very *clear* and *express*, but the *Reason of the Thing* dark and *obscure*; as in the venerable *Mysteries* of our *Faith*. Here *Reason* proceeds only upon *extrinsic* Evidence, the *Authority* of the *Revealer*, and the *Proofs* brought to shew that This is revealed, and This the Sense of it: Not pretending to say *how*, or *why* Those Things are, but that they *really are*, because God has *declared* them.

In other Points, *Scripture* may be *obscure* or *silent*, but the *Reason of the Thing* (taking in What *Scripture* has elsewhere plainly asserted) very *clear* and *manifest*, as in the Case of *Infant-Baptism*. The Use of *Reason* in This, and other the like Cases, is to shew What by *Analogy*, or *Consequence*, though not *directly*, *Scripture* either allows, commands, or condemns. There is yet a fourth Case where neither *Scripture* nor the *Reason of the Thing* are *clear*; Both together affording only dark Hints of What is, or is not: As in the Case of *Heathens*, or *unbaptized Infants*; What *their Portion* shall be in a *World to come*. In these, and the like Cases, there is Ground only for a *probable* Assent. It is, however, the Business of *Reason* to lay Things carefully together, to make the best of its Materials, and to lean to the *safer*, or *more charitable* Side, without being too *positive*, or *dogmatical* in Either. Thus We see how the Office of *Reason* runs through all the Parts of Religion, and is very serviceable to it; directing Us how to form our Judgment, and fix our Faith, and next enabling Us to defend it. Thus are We to *prove* and *examine* all Things, so far as our *Abilities*, *Leisure*, or other Circumstances, permit: But We must remove, as much as possible, every Impediment which may obstruct the *free Exercise* of our Reason; such as Love of *Novelty*, or a *superstitious* Veneration for *Antiquity*; either *too great* Deference to *Authority* on one Hand, or *too little* on the other; either an *overweening* *Regard* to this or that Church, Sect, or Party; or a *supercilious* *Contempt* of, and invenom'd Hatred against Any. We are to remove all such Obstacles to *free* and *ingenuous* Enquiry, and at the same Time, to take in all *necessary* *Helps* for the due Improvement and Advancement of our Understandings. When, by the careful Observance of those good and wholesome Rules, We have done our Parts in *proving all Things*; then are We to remember also the other Precept of the Text, which is,

II.

To hold fast That which is good.

After due Care in examining, naturally follow *Wisdom in chusing*, and *Firmness in retaining*; without which all We have before done becomes vain and fruitless. To be always seeking without finding the Thing we want; To be ever learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth; To be, like Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, is but a mean and a disparaging Character, neither becoming a Christian nor a Man. Care and Caution are proper in the Entrance to the Work of Faith: But Resolution and Steadiness must help it on, and carry it up to Perfection. It is the distinguishing Mark and Property, the Pride and Glory of every wise and good Man, not to be soon shaken in Mind; but to be steadfast and unmovable, after He has once well deliberated, and made a wise Choice.—But here it may be ask'd, Must We then unalterably resolve, after We have once settled our Opinions, and, as We are verily persuaded, upon good Reasons, never to recede the least Tittle from Them? Must We turn the deaf Ear to all Reasons or Arguments offer'd to convince us of a presumed Mistake, or to convert us from it? There is no Man of so solid and correct a Judgment but He may sometimes err: Few so careful in their Enquiries, but Who, at some Time or other, may take a Thing for Demonstration, which hath little or no Ground; or reject Another Thing as false, which may prove a certain Truth. And then it is notorious that Mens Judgments commonly ripen with their Years; and They may often see Reason to retract some Things which, upon the best Reason They before had, They might think it necessary to receive. It would be hard to preclude a Man, at any Age of his Life, from growing wiser; which seems to be the Case, if He is never to permit any Matter of his Faith to be brought in Question before Him, or to hear what may be fairly offer'd against it. What then must be done in This Case? or how far are we to carry our Resolution, and Steadfastness, in What We have once made the Subject of our Belief? To This I answer, that there is certainly a just Medium, a golden Mean, to be observed by every wise and good Man, whether in his religious, or secular Concerns. It is no Reproach to any Man's Constancy, sometimes to alter his Judgment, or vary his Measures, in Matters of Civil Prudence. And so neither is it any Reproach upon Christian Steadfastness, sometimes to correct our former Judgments, or to alter them for the better. But then, as in
secular

secular Affairs to be ever *unsteady* and irresolute, is a certain Mark of a very *weak Man*; so in *religious* also, is it a certain Token of a very *weak*, or very *dissolute Christian*. And as in *civil* Matters, *wise* Men generally have fixed upon some certain *Maxims*, some prime and leading Principles of Action, which They will never *alter*, nor so much as *call in Question* all their Lives after; So also in our *religious* Concernments, every *wise* and good *Christian* will fix upon some plain and *fundamental* Articles of Faith, which He will never after *recede* from, nor so much as think Himself obliged to hear *debated* and *canvassed* a second Time. There are some Things so *clear* and *evident* upon the *first Examining*, that it will not be necessary to give them a *new Hearing*: All pretended Objections against them, may be reasonably rejected in the Lump, as not worth the Notice, nor deserving a *wise Man's* Care, after He is once *fully enlightened* with a *clear Perception* of the *contrary Truth*.—For Example: After a Man has been but tolerably instructed in the Grounds of the *Christian Religion*, which carries so much *Force* and *Evidence* in it, it will not be necessary to allow *Paganism*, *Judaism*, or *Mahometanism*, so much as a *Hearing*, except it be for the sake of Others only, Who may want to have Those Pretences exposed or confuted. The like may be said of *Atheists* or *Deists*: The Proofs of a *God*, and of the *Christian Revelation*, are so *full*, *clear*, and *strong*, that after a Man has once seen into them, He need not stay to deliberate, or wait till He has examined the *contrary Pretences*; well knowing beforehand, that They can have no real Weight or Solidity in Them. As to other Cases, This Procedure is justifiable more or less, in Proportion to the *greater* or *smaller* Evidence upon which any Doctrine is founded. And some Allowance must be made for such Doctrines as have been *often* and *fully debated* by *wise*, *great*, and *good Men*, and constantly *determined the same Way*. There is a strong Presumption in their Favour, that they are most certainly true; or at least that there neither is, nor can be any sufficient Reason for rejecting them as *false*; and that therefore They may very safely, and justly, be received as true, without more *particular Examination*; unless there should be some Appearance of *new Light*, and *additional Evidence*, such as our Predecessors had been Strangers to. In a Word, then, there may be Cases so plain and clear, either in *Faith* or *Morality*, that it may be sufficient to examine the *Proofs* upon which They stand, without attending to the *Objections* on the other Side, which may be known beforehand to be Nothing else but *Cavil*, and *Trifling*. And in these Cases, it may be our Duty

to hold fast *That which is good*, without so much as giving the least Ear to any contrary Pretences. But then, as there are many other Cases of a more doubtful Nature, our Obligations to hold fast *What* we have once received, must admit of this *Restriction* or *Limitation*, that we be nevertheless ready and willing to submit the Cause to *Debate*, and to give it a new *Hearing*. In such a Case our Ears must be always open to *Reason* when offered in due Manner and Form, with Sobriety, and in the Fear of God : And there We are to take Care to suffer Our Selves to be influenced by *Reasons*, and *Reasons only* : Not by *Humour*, or *Caprice*, or *Fickleness* of Temper ; like Some Who, for the sake of *one pressing Difficulty*, will give up What was founded on *many plain*, and *convincing Reasons* : Not by *Vanity* or *Self-conceit* ; like Some Who are desirous of giving up *old Truths*, only because They have prevailed, to become the *Leaders of a Sect*, and the *Heads of a Party* : Not by *Ambition*, *Avarice*, or vile *Affections* ; like Many, Who make Shipwreck of their *Faith*, to serve a *present Turn*, or to gratify their Lusts and Passions : Not by *Fear*, or by *Complaisance* ; like Those Who have no *Principles of their own*, but are blindly led, or overawed by *Others* ; Who can flit from Church to Church, from Party to Party, as They are directed ; prepared to be of *This*, or *That*, or of *All* Religious ; and to be sincere and constant in *None*. In a Word, Nothing but *Reasons*, and *good Reasons*, will ever move an honest and a wise Man to *change* his Belief, or Persuasion. And then indeed to *change* is the truest *Constancy* ; as the *parting with an Error*, is, in reality, the *holding fast That which is good*. Only This We may say, that after a Man has once *deliberately* made his Choice, and formed his Persuasion, He ought then to lean to that Side, with some Degree of Assurance and Confidence, and not to be apt to take up Scruples, or to entertain Suspicions of it. Perfect *Indifference* may be the proper Temper of Mind to *begin* with, and to *continue* in, during the Time of the *Examination* ; but no longer : Afterwards, it will be no Fault, but a Commendation rather, to lean to one Side more than to another ; and to expect *very clear* and *strong Reasons*, before We are prevailed with to recede from it. As I before instanced in the Choice of *Friends* ; great *Caution*, *Diffidence*, *Suspicion*, and *Distrust*, are very proper and necessary in the *Choice* : But when the Choice has been made, it would be very unreasonable to be *still* full of *Scruple*, and *Doubt* ; or not to confide with great Assurance in Those whom we had *so cautiously* and *deliberately* chosen. It would be great Injustice towards Them

to be still *prone to suspect* Them, or not to be *partial* in some Measure, in their Favour, requiring *very full and clear* Reasons against Them, before We entertain any Doubts of Them.

Such is the Case also in relation to Matters of *Faith*, or Principles of *Religion* once *deliberately* receiv'd. They ought, from that Time forwards, to be allowed all favourable Presumption, and Equity of Construction: And now all the Jealousy, Diffidence, and Distrust is to be thrown upon the other Side, 'till *very plain and cogent* Reasons can be brought to overturn, or over-rule That which we have espoused.

This appears to be the true and right Method of avoiding Both the *Extremes*; that of *implicite* and uncautious *Credulity* on one Hand, or of *Fickleness* and desultorious *Levity* on the other.

Now to apply very briefly What hath been here said, to our own particular Case and Circumstances. As many of us as are here present may be presumed to have *fixed our Choice*, *First*, of the *Christian Religion*, in Opposition to *Pagan, Jewish, or Mahometan*: And, *Secondly*, of a *Reformed Religion*, in Opposition to *Popish Novelty and Superstition*: And, *Thirdly*, of the Religion of the *Church of England*, in Opposition to all other *Sects, Parties, or Denominations* of reformed Christians. They who *have examined* into these three Things, *know* them to be *good*: And They who *have not*, ought to examine so far as they are able, that They also *may know*: And then Nothing remains but to *hold Them fast*, and to make suitable Improvements of them in our Lives and Conversations. *Let us, then, hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised:)* And let Us consider One Another to *provoke unto Love, and to good Works*.*

* Heb. x. 23, 24.



S E R M O N V.

The precise Nature and Force of CHRIST's Argument, founded on Exod. iii. 6. against the Sadducees.

LUKE XX. 37. 38.

*Now, that the Dead are raised, even MOSES shewed at the Bush, when He calleth the Lord, The God of ABRAHAM, and the God of ISAAC, and the God of JACOB: For, He is not a God of the Dead, but of the Living: For All live to Him.**

THESE Words are the concluding Part of our Lord's Reply to the SADDUCEES, a libertine Sect of the Jews, Who (like the EPICUREANS before, and other Infidels since) for the sake only of indulging their Lusts, and to remove the Dread of an After-reckoning, thought proper to reject the Belief of a *Resurrection*, and a *Life to come*. But yet, to save Appearances, and to keep up an outward Shew of Religion among their Countrymen, They profess'd a great Regard to the same common Scriptures, as the Oracles of God, and sought out Colours from those very Scriptures, whereby to countenance, or seemingly to authorize, their wanton and wicked Opinions. They came to our Blessed Lord, and propounded a captious Question to Him, grounded upon MOSES's Law, artfully insinuating, as if MOSES Himself must have been in their Sentiments; For, He had ordered that several Brothers in Succession should take the same surviving Wife: A Law which seemed to preclude any future Resurrection; since, upon That Supposition, there could be no adjusting the contradictory Claims. *Whose Wife*, said They, *is she in*
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* Conf. Matt. xxii. 31. Mark xii. 26.

the Resurrection? Our Blessed Lord, in Reply, corrected their fond Mistake in judging of a Life to come by the Life that now is, when Circumstances would be widely different. In this World, where Mankind go off and die daily, there is a Necessity of a constant and regular Succession to supply the Decays of Mortality: But in a World to come, where None die any more, the Reason then ceases, inasmuch as there will be no Occasion for any further Supplies. Our Blessed Lord, by thus distinguishing upon the Case, defeated the Objection: But to shew farther, how ill the SADDUCEES had contrived, in appealing to MOSES as a Favourer of their Sentiments, He reminds Them of a famous Passage in MOSES's Law, which was directly contrary to their Principles, being indeed a full and clear Proof of a *Resurrection*, and *future State*. Now, that the Dead are raised, (or shall be raised) even MOSES shewed at the Bush, when He calleth the Lord, The God of ABRAHAM, and the God of ISAAC, and the God of JACOB: For He is not a God of the Dead, but of the Living; For all live to Him. In discoursing upon which Words, I propose more particularly to consider,

- I. What the *distinguishing Principles* of the ancient SADDUCEES really were.
- II. Why our Lord chose to confront Them with a Text out of MOSES's Writings, rather than with any other out of the Old Testament.
- III. Wherein *precisely* the Force of our Lord's Argument, built upon that Text, consists.

I.

As to the *first Article*; The distinguishing Principles of the SADDUCEES are briefly summed up by St. LUKE in the twenty-third of the ACTS, Thus: *The SADDUCEES say, that there is no Resurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit; but the PHARISEES confess Both*†. From whence We may observe, that the SADDUCEES did not only reject the *Resurrection* of the Body, but They denied a *Future State*; They did not allow that the Soul survived the Body: They looked upon the Doctrines of a *Resurrection* and *Future State* to be so nearly allied, or so closely connected with each other, that they might reasonably be conceived to stand or fall together; Wherefore,

† ACTS xxiii. 8.

Wherefore They denied *Both*; as, on the other Hand, the PHARISEES admitted *Both*. For if the *Soul* survived the *Body*, it was very natural to suppose, that some time or other the *Body* would be again raised up, and re-united, to make a whole *Man*: But if the *Soul* died with the *Body*, it was obvious to infer, there would be no *Resurrection*; since That would amount, in such a Case, to a new *Creation*, rather than a *Resurrection* properly so called, and the Parties so raised would not be the same Persons as before. This observable *Connexion* of the two several Doctrines seems to have made the SADDUCEES deny *Both*; And the Consideration thereof will be of Use to Us in explaining the Force of our Lord's Argument; as will be seen in the Sequel.

There is one noted Difficulty in St. LUKE's Account of the SADDUCEES, relating to their Denial of the Existence of *Angels*. Other Accounts of Jewish Writers are silent on that Head; and it might seem very needless for the SADDUCEES to clog their Cause with it, since it was sufficient for their Purpose, to reject only the separate Subsistence of Human Souls; and it is odd that They should run so flatly counter to the History of the Old Testament (which is full of What concerns *Angels*) when They had really no great Necessity for it, nor Temptation to it, so far as appears. But, perhaps, They thought it the shortest and surest Way, to reject the whole Doctrine of *Spirits*, or, at least, of created *Spirits*, and so to settle in *Materialism*, after the Example of some Pagan Philosophers; and therefore they at once discarded both *Angels* and *separate Souls*: And as to the Old Testament standing directly against Them, with respect to *Angels*; there are so many various Ways of playing upon Words, especially in dead Writings, that Men, resolute to maintain a Point (whatever it be) can never be at a Loss for Evasions. This appears to be a fair Account of the whole Case, if it be certain that St. LUKE is to be understood of their denying *Angels*, properly so called. Nevertheless, I apprehend, there may be some Reason to question whether He might not use the Word in a particular Sense, so as to mean no more by it than a *Human Soul*. It is certain, that the Pagan Writers, before his Time, had been used to give the Name of *Angels* to good Souls departed; and, that the Jews also sometimes did the same, may appear from the Writings of PHILO the Jew, who lived in that Age. Possibly, St. LUKE, knowing that the Word *Angel* had been so used, might mean only to say, that the SADDUCEES rejected the Doctrine of the *Resurrection*, and the other Doctrine of *separate Souls*, whether called *Angels*,

Angels, as by Some, or *Spirits* only, as by Others. There is another Place in this Book of the *Acts*, where the Word *Angel* seems to have been used in the like improper Sense; when Some, speaking of PETER, confidently reported to be at the Door, and the Thing was thought impossible, said, It is *his Angel*;* as much as to say, It is his *Ghost*: For they had Reason to believe, that He had been *executed* by that Time. I am aware, that Interpreters give quite another Gloss to that Passage: But 'tis obvious to observe withal, how much They are perplex'd with it, and how difficult it is to make tolerable Sense of the Place in their Way, or in any Way, excepting such as I have mention'd.

However, I would be understood to offer this other Interpretation, as *Conjecture* only, and as tending to clear up some noted Difficulties in St. LUKE's Account of the SADDUCEES, in the easiest Manner; while We do not want a Solution of them, if This should not satisfy; for I have my self given one before: But if this second Solution, which I have here offered, appears preferable to the other; We may then acquit the SADDUCEES of the Charge of discarding *Angels*, properly so called, and condemn Them only as rejecting a *Resurrection*, and a *Future State*. This Account will appear the better, when it is considered that St. LUKE says, the PHARISEES admitted *Both*. Both what? There had been *Three* Things mentioned, if *Angel* makes a *distinct* Article: But if *Angel* there means no more than an *Human Soul*, then the Articles are reduced to *Two* only, and so it was very proper to say, *Both*; namely, both the *Resurrection*, and the *separate State* of the *Soul*.

However That be, (for I would not dwell long upon a By-point) This is certain, that the Captious Question put to our Lord, and his Answer to it, concerned only the Case of *Mankind*, and had Nothing to do with *Angels*. The Point in Dispute was only This: Whether Men should *live again* after Death, and live in the *Body*; which tho' seemingly *Two* Points, yet in effect amounted but to *One*, as I before observed.

II.

I proceed now, *Secondly*, to inquire, why our Blessed Lord chose to confront the SADDUCEES with a Text out of MOSES's Writings, rather than out of any *other* Part of the Old Testament. For it is thought, that there are several other Texts there, plainer and more express to the Purpose, than

That which our Lord has cited, as perhaps there are; for I need not dispute that Point, or run out into Comparisons.

Some have given it in for a Reason of our Lord's Choice; that MOSES's Books were the only ones which the SADDUCEES received as *Canonical Scripture*. But the Fact is disputable at least, if not certainly false. Others say, that our Lord chose to confute Them out of the Book of the Law, as being of prime Value, and of *greatest Authority*: And That indeed is a Consideration which is not without its Weight. But yet I humbly conceive, that We have no Occasion to look far for Reasons, when the Text itself, with what goes along with it, sufficiently accounts for the whole Thing. The SADDUCEES had formed their *Objection* upon the *Books* of MOSES, claiming MOSES as a *Voucher* on their Side. In such a Case, it was extremely proper, and pertinent (if it could be done) to confute the Men from MOSES Himself: It was vindicating MOSES's Writings, at the same Time that it was doing Justice to an important Truth: And so it was answering two very considerable Ends, Both at once. Our Blessed Lord therefore applied Himself entirely to the clearing up MOSES's Sentiments in that Article, and He effected it *two Ways*: *First* by observing, that what the SADDUCEES had cited from Him, did not *prove* what They wished for; and, *Secondly*, by shewing that what He had *taught elsewhere*, fully and clearly *disproved* it. Our Lord perhaps might have found either in the *Psalms*, or in the *Prophets*, many other as clear, or clearer Texts to prove a *Resurrection*, or *Future State*: But all of them together would not so well have suited his Purpose, as one Text out of MOSES; because They would not have been so well fitted to turn off the Edge of the *Objection* here brought. They might have served to ballance it, or over-rule it, and to break its Force; but the Way which our Lord took, disabled it at once, and threw it quite out, that it should rise up no more. So then, if We consider Him merely as *maintaining a Position*, He might perhaps have chosen some clearer or stronger Texts; but if We consider Him in Capacity of *Respondent*, and as defeating a subtle and plausible *Objection*, there could not have been a more effectual Way of doing it: And He very well knew, that sometimes the hitting off an *Objection* in a neat, clear, and strong Manner, has more Weight with the Generality, than the pouring in many Demonstrations on the other Side. Accordingly we find, by the Event, how well the Thing answered. The SADDUCEES were effectually put to *Silence*: So sensible were They of the Force of what He had said.

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The SCRIBES, They highly applauded it, and complimented Him upon it, *Master, Thou hast well said.*† And even the Common People readily understood the Strength of his Reasoning, and mightily admired it, and assented to it: For, Sr. MATTHEW tells us, that *when the Multitude heard it, They were astonished at his Doctrine, on that Head.*‡

III.

Come We therefore, *Thirdly*, to consider the *Force of our Lord's Argument*, which was then so clearly apprehended, at first Hearing, by Learned and Unlearned, by Friends and Adversaries, and admired by All. We may judge from thence, that it requires no long Train of Thought to comprehend it, no intense Application to be Master of it, if We happen to take it right. But It may be Reason sufficient for rejecting any Interpretation, if It appears *laboured* and *subtle*, and not well accommodated to ordinary Capacities. Let us see then: The Words which the Argument is grounded upon, occur in the Sixth Verse of the Third Chapter of *Exodus*. *I am the God of ABRAHAM, and the God of ISAAE, and the God of JACOB.*—*I am*, not, *I was*: God was then God of those three Patriarchs, the Latest of which had been dead above 170 Years; still He continued to be *their* God. What could That mean? Is He a God of *lifeless Clay*, of moulder'd Carcases, of Dust and Rottenness? No sure: Besides, with what Propriety of Speech, could the Ashes of the Ground be yet called ABRAHAM, or ISAAC, or JACOB? Those Names are the Names of *Persons*, not of *senseless Earth*, and *Person* always goes where the *Intelligence* goes: Therefore ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB were still *living* and *intelligent*, somewhere or other, when God declared, He was still *their* God; that is to say, They were alive as to their better Part, their *Souls*; He is not a God of the Dead, but of the Living: Therefore the *Soul survives the Body*: Therefore the SADDUCEES, who denied the *separate Subsistence of Souls or Spirit*, were confuted at once, and That by a very clear and plain Text, produced even from the Books of MOSES.

But it will here be ask'd, How does This prove The *Resurrection of the Body*, which was the Point in Question? I answer, That was not the *only* Point, nor the *main* Point, though it follows This other, as I shall shew presently: But We may observe, in the mean while, that if The Argument really reached no farther than what I have mention'd, yet it was a very considerable Point gain'd, and the rest was not

† Luke xx. 39.

‡ Matt. xxii. 33.

not worth disputing; or, however, the *Sadducees* would not dispute it. What They were afraid of, was a *future Account*: Now, whether it be, that Men shall give an Account *in the Body, or without the Body*, it would come much to the same; for still there would be an *Account* to be given, and there would remain the like dreadful Apprehension of a *Judgment* to come. Here lay the *main Stress* of the Dispute; and therefore when our Lord had undeniably proved a *Future State*, He had gone to the very *Root* of the *Sadducean Principles*; and if They once yielded thus far, They might readily grant the rest. Our Blessed Lord knew the Men thoroughly, and took the shortest Way of confuting them, by striking at the very Heart of their Heresy. If He proved no more than the *Soul's Subsisting* after *Death*, He proved enough to make the rest needless: For, as the Principles of the *SADDUCEES* hung all in a Chain, the breaking but one Link rendered the whole unserviceable. Admit but of a *Future State*, and then their fond Hopes were defeated, and their guilty Fears alarm'd; and it was all to no Purpose for Them to contend any farther upon that Head. This our Lord, being a Discerner of the Thoughts, perfectly knew; and so by aiming his Darts aright, He at once silenced the Men, and quashed the Dispute. Such was his constant Way in all his Contests with his captious Adversaries: He instantly perceived where the *whole Stress* of the Cause lay, and there pointed his *Replies* with inimitable Force. But to proceed:

Though the Argument made Use of by our Lord, proved no more, *directly*, than What I have said (and even That was enough) yet it might be easy to proceed upon it, 'till it would at length *conclude* in the Doctrine of a *Resurrection*, to make all complete. For, if it be considered, that *Death* was the *Punishment of Sin*, and that Every Person, remaining under that Sentence, and under the Dominion of Death, still carries about Him the Badges of the *first Transgression*, and the Marks of Divine Displeasure; I say, the Case being so, it cannot reasonably be supposed that the *Souls of good Men*, whom God has owned for *his*, shall for ever remain in that *inglorious State*; but will some Time or other be *restored* to their *first Honours*, or to What They were first ordained to in Paradise, before *Sin* entred. Wherefore, since God is pleased to acknowledge Himself still God of *ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB*; it is highly reasonable to presume, that He will in due time restore Them to their *original Privileges*, removing from Them the Chains of *Death*, by re-uniting
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Soul and Body together in a happy and glorious *Resurrection*. Thus, the same Thread of Argument, which our Lord began with, and which *directly* proves the *Immortality of the Soul*, does also in Conclusion lead us on, by just and clear *Consequences*, to the *Resurrection of the Body*.

It may perhaps be objected, that the Argument thus explain'd, proves only that *good Souls* shall survive, and receive their Bodies new raised; not that the *wicked* shall; and Therefore The *Sadducees* were not intirely confuted. But since the *main Principle* of the *SADDUCEES* was, that *None at all* do so survive; They are abundantly confuted by proving that *Some*, at least, do; and every Man's common Sense will easily supply the rest: For if *good Men* subsist after Death, and are to be amply rewarded for their *Obedience*; Who can make any Question, but that the *wicked* also shall subsist, to receive the Reward of their *Disobedience*? Those *two Points* have so natural a *Relation* and *Congruity* together, that They *imply*, or infer each other; and the proving *Either*, is in effect proving *Both*. That the *SADDUCEES* well knew; and therefore in order to avoid *One*, They saw no other Way but to reject *Both*: Therefore, when our Blessed Lord had so plainly established *one*, He might be understood, by certain Inference and Implication, to have established the *other* also.

I have but one Thing more to observe upon the Text; namely, that Some Persons have presumed to argue from the Words, *For all live to Him*, that Souls do not actually *live* in a separate State, but only, that dead Men shall be recalled to Life, and that for the *present* they *live* only in *God's Decree*, and in a *metaphorical* Sense: But This is a forced Construcion of very plain Words, without Reason, or Foundation for it. To *live to God*, is a Phrase which is to be understood in Opposition to *living in the Flesh*, or *living unto this World*: And it is of the same Import with What We meet with in *Ecclesiastes*, where it is said, *The Spirit shall return unto God who gave it*;* or with That of the Book of *Wisdom*—*The Souls of the Righteous are in the Hands of God*.† This is what is meant by *living to God*: They are under his Eye, and within his Protection, in the invisible World, after having taken their Farewel of This; In short, when They have done with the Life that now is, They yet remain, and are alive unto God, enjoying his Presence, and rejoicing in his Favour and Protection.

The Sum then of what has been said is, That the *Soul* of Man is of a Substance distinct from the Body; that it *sub-*

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* Eccl. xii. 7.

† Wisd. iii. 1.

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sists in a separate State, after the animal Dissolution, and never dies; and lastly, that All Men shall one Day rise again with their Bodies, and shall give Account for their own Works. The practical Use of these Principles is obvious; that since a future Judgment is certain and inevitable, and that disbelieving it (with the Sadducees of old, or with Others since) can do a Man no Service, except it be to swell the sad Account; and since there is no possible Way of fencing against it, but by taking all due Care to be provided for it; since these Things are so, The best, and indeed the only Expedient we have to trust to, is to lead a good Life, to endeavour after universal Righteousness, both of Faith and Manners: So may We be able (in and through the all-prevailing Merits of CHRIST) to abide the tremendous Judgment, and be received with ABRAHAM, ISAAC and JACOB, into those blessed Mansions which God has prepared for as Many as sincerely love Him, and keep his Commandments,





S E R M O N VI.

A good Life the surest Title to a good Conscience.

I JOHN III. 21, 22.

Beloved, if our Heart condemn Us not, then have We Confidence towards God: And whatsoever We ask, We receive of Him, because We keep his Commandments, and do those Things that are pleasing in his Sight.

THESE Words will lead Me to treat of the Nature and Quality of a good Conscience, and the Comforts of it. The Apostle had been before speaking of assuring our Hearts before God by the strongest Evidences possible, by a true and unfeigned Love of the Brethren. *Hereby, says He, We know, that We are of the Truth; and shall assure our Hearts, that is, pacify our Consciences, before Him.* Then He adds, *for if our own Hearts condemn Us, God will much more condemn Us: inasmuch as God is greater than our Hearts, his Knowledge is of greater Extent than Ours, He knoweth all Things.* But *if our Hearts condemn Us not, after close and impartial Examination of our Conduct, then have We, with good Reason, Confidence towards God; not doubting but that He will freely grant Whatsoever We may properly ask of Him, so long as We keep his Commandments, doing those Things that are pleasing in his Sight.* Such appears to be the Tour or Turn of the Apostle's Sentiments, collected from the Text and Context. In discoursing farther, it may be proper,

I. To state the *Nature and Quality* of a *sure Conscience*, or *clear Conscience*, or What We commonly call a *good Conscience*.

II. To set forth the *Advantage and Comfort* of it.

I.

The Nature of a *sure* or *clear* Conscience ought to be first justly stated; lest We should mistake Shadow for Substance, Appearances for Realities, Presumption and vain Confidence, for Truth and Soberness. The Apostle points out the general Nature of a *good* Conscience by this Mask; that our *Hearts condemn us not*, and that *We know that We are of the Truth*; know it by some certain Rule, namely by This, that *We keep God's Commandments*, doing That which is *pleasing in his Sight*. Here is a Rule given whereby We may first measure our *Conduct*; And if our *Conduct* be found, upon a just Examination, to square with *That Rule*, then our *Consciences* are *clear*, and We may look up with a becoming Confidence to God. This is a Matter of great Weight, and of the last Importance: And yet there is no where more Room for Self-Flattery, and Self-Deceit. It is extremely natural for a Person to bring in a Verdict in Favour of Himself, when He has made no Examination at all, or a very superficial one, or however not so strict and severe a Scrutiny as an Affair of such Delicacy, and withal of such Moment, deserves. A Man will often call it acting according to his *Conscience*, when He acts according to his *present Persuasion*, without ever examining how He came by that Persuasion; whether through wrong Education, Custom, or Example; or whether from some secret Lust, Pride, or Prejudice, rather than from the Rule of God's written Word, or from a Principle of right Reason. This cannot be justly called keeping a *good Conscience*: For, We ought not to take up *false Persuasions* at all Adventures, and then to make those *Persuasions* our *Rule of Life*, instead of that Rule which God hath given us to walk by.

It may perhaps be said, that St. PAUL Himself has warranted that Way of speaking: For, though He had once very wrongfully and grievously, under *rash* and *false Persuasion*, persecuted the Church of God, yet He scrupled not to say, upon a certain Occasion, afterwards, *Men and Brethren, I have lived in all good Conscience before God, until this Day.** But as there is no Necessity of construing the Words in that large Sense; so there are good Reasons to persuade us, that St. PAUL had no such Meaning. How frequently does He charge Himself in his Epistles, as having been a very grievous Sinner, yea *chief of Sinners*,† on Account of his having once persecuted the Church of God? How then could He modestly pretend,

* Acts xxiii. 1.

† 1 Tim. i. 15.

pretend, or with Truth say, that He had lived in *all good Conscience*, all his Life, to that Day? At other Times, whenever the same Apostle speaks of his having a *good Conscience*, He constantly understood it with a View only to What He had done as a *Christian*, in his converted State. Herein, says He, *do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Men.** This was said in the Way of Answer to the false Accusations of the *Jews*, like as the former, and occurs in the Chapter next following: And the Words plainly relate only to his *Christian* Conversation; not to his former *Jewish* one. He had lived in all good Conscience, with respect to what the *Jews* had accused Him of: For, *neither against the Law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, neither yet against CÆSAR, had He offended any thing at all,†* from the Time of his Conversion to Christ. So, St. PAUL's Phrase of a *good Conscience*, did not mean merely the living up to one's *Persuasion*, of whatever Kind it were, but living up to a *just and well-grounded Persuasion*, of What is consonant to the *Will of God*. If a Person acts merely according to his present *ill-grounded Persuasion*, which He never seriously and impartially examin'd into, He cannot be properly said to maintain a *good Conscience*, because if He has any Self-Reflection at all, his *Conscience* must smite Him, and his *own Heart* condemn Him, for not taking more Care to inform Himself better. Every Person is in Duty bound to *prove all Things*, so far as, humanly speaking, in his Circumstances, He may; in Order both to admit and to *hold fast that which is good.‡* It is deceiving Our Selves to imagine that We have a *good Conscience*, when We have used no reasonable Care in examining whether it be a *right Conscience*, a *well-grounded Persuasion* that we proceed upon, or not.

There is another common Method of *Self-deceit*, when a Person, Who well enough *understands* the Rule He is to go by, yet forgets to *apply* it to his own particular Case, and so speaks Peace to Himself, all the while that He transgresses it. It is irksome and painful to make Home Reflections: And it is a much easier Way, to take it for granted, that We have done nothing amiss, than to be critical, and prying into our own Bosoms. King SAUL could say confidently, even after the Prophet SAMUEL had reproved Him, that He had *obeyed the Voice of the Lord, and had gone the Way which the Lord sent Him.||* He had done it indeed in Part; And, under a Kind

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* Acts xxiv. 16.

† 1 Thess. v. 21.

† Acts xxv. 8.

|| 1 Sam. xv. 26.

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of Confusion of Thought (natural or artificial) He was disposed to pass that *Part* off, for the Whole, till his Mistake was pressed so close upon Him, that there was no Room for Evasion. A much better Man than He (I mean DAVID) after two very grievous Transgressions, appeared to be under the like Insensibility, and the like Self-Confidence (either blinded by the Height of his Station, or the Strength of his Passions) till the Prophet NATHAN, by an affecting Parable, shew'd Him his Mistake, and then charged the Matter home to Him, by saying, *Thou art the Man**. There is a Kind of Fascination in Self-Flattery, for the Time, which makes a Man blind to his own Failings, and prompts Him to speak Peace to Himself, when He has no Foundation for it, but a fond Presumption, or an overweening Vanity.

But the Way to have *solid* and *abiding Satisfaction*, is first to examine Our Selves, strictly and impartially, by the Rule of *God's Commandments*; in Order to see clearly how far We have come up to it, or how far, and in what Instances we have transgressed it, or come short of it. If, after a strict Scrutiny, We can pronounce assuredly, that our Heart is right, and our Ways good (due Allowances only made for Sins of daily Incurfion, or human Infirmities) We may then presume to think, that We have a *clear Conscience* in the main, and such as may embolden Us to look up with a good Degree of Confidence towards God, as One that will mercifully accept of our Prayers here, and of our Souls and Bodies hereafter.

I am aware of a Difficulty which may arise from some Words of St. PAUL, which at first hearing may appear to clash with the Doctrine of the Text, as I have been expounding it. St. PAUL says, *I judge not mine Own Self: For I know nothing by my self: Yet am I not hereby justified: But He that judgeth me, is the Lord. Therefore judge Nothing before the Time, until the Lord come, &c.†* Do not these Words sound, as if no certain Judgment could, or ought to be made by any Man of his own spiritual State to Godwards? And if so, What becomes of the Comfort of a *good Conscience*? Or how can We have that *Confidence towards God*, which the Text speaks of? In Answer to the seeming Difficulty, I may observe, *first*, that it is certain St. PAUL could not mean to detract from the joyous Comfort of a *good Conscience*, since He more than once declared expressly, that it was What He Himself enjoy'd, and He was fully assured of it: Besides that No Man ever expressed a more satisfactory Assurance of his own *final Justifi-*
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* 2 Sam. xii. 7.

† 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 5.

ration than He once did, in these Words: *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that Day.** So far St. PAUL: How then could He say, *judge nothing before the Time, until the Lord come*, if That were his Meaning, that a Man might not judge of his own spiritual State beforehand, nor speak Peace to Himself upon the Strength of a *clear Conscience?* Those Two Suppositions are evidently contradictory to each other, and can never stand together. Wherefore We must of Necessity look out for some other Meaning of What St. PAUL says, concerning the Impropriety of judging any Thing of our selves before the final Day of Judgment. He was there speaking of the fulfilling the *Work of the Ministry* with the utmost Exactness; and He would have No Man presume to *judge beforehand* that He had so fulfilled it: For, though He should be able to espy Nothing in Himself wherein he had been to blame, had no Sin to charge Himself with on that Head; yet That would not suffice to clear Him perfectly, that is, to *justify* Him in the strictest Sense, because God might see Faults, either of *Omission* or *Commission*, which the Man Himself might not be aware of: Therefore, says the Apostle, *judge Nothing* as to your faithful fulfilling your Duty in every Point, *before the Time*: Presume not so far: God only can judge whether you have been altogether free from Blame in that Article. So the Meaning of the Apostle, in that Place, was only to check vain *Presumption*, and to prevent proud *Boasting*: And it comes almost to the same with what St. JAMES says, *In many Things we offend All:†* And what St. JOHN says, *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, &c.‖* Or to what the Psalmist intimates by saying, *Who can understand his Errors? Cleanse Thou me from my secret Faults.‡* Now, the Doctrine of a good Conscience, or of an humble Assurance of our being in a State of Grace, is very consistent with this other Doctrine, that the very Best of Men are Sinners in God's Sight, and may in sundry Instances be found worthy of Blame, more than They Themselves had been ever aware of. The Gospel-Remedy for those secret Sins, those which have neither escaped our Notice, or have slipp'd out of Memory, is a general Repentance, together with such Kind of Prayers as the Psalmist put up to the Throne of Grace, when He said, *Cleanse Thou me from my secret Faults.* Such Kind of Sins of Ignorance;

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or

* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

‖ 1 John i. 8.

† Jam. iii. 2.

‡ Psal. xix. 13.

er of *Infirmity*, are no Bar to true *Peace of Mind*, or to the Comforts of a *good Conscience*, or to a *modest Assurance* of our being in a *State of Grace* and Favour; provided only, that, upon a serious Examination of our own Hearts and Lives, We do find that We *indulge* no *known Habits* of Sin; but use our careful Endeavours, by the Help of God's Grace, to discharge our bounden Duty in that Station of Life whereunto God has called Us. So then, this Place of St. PAUL, rightly understood, interferences not at all with the Doctrine of the Text as before explained. And I may further hint, that there were some Ministers of the Gospel of that Time, Who were too much *puffed up*, and affected to be thought *more considerable* than St. PAUL Himself; and it was chiefly with a View to those Men that St. PAUL here spake so exceeding modestly of Himself, in Order to teach Them Modesty in such a Way, as might give Them least Offence: Wherefore He says in Verse the 6th of the same Chapter, *These Things, Brethren, I have in a Figure transferred to my Self and to APOLLOS, for your Sakes: That Ye might learn in Us, not to think of Men above. That which is written, that No One of You be puffed up for One against Another.* He was sensible that Some of the Church of CORINTH magnified Themselves too much, and were too much magnified by Others, in the Way of Emulation: But it was a very tender Point to speak plainly of, or even to touch upon, for Fear of widening the Breach, and heightening the Divisions: Therefore He chose that softest Way of Rebuke, not naming the Persons Who were most to blame, but naming Himself in their Stead; and describing in his own Person, as a Minister of CHRIST, how *humbly* and how *modestly* Every One ought to think of Himself, and behave in his Station.

But I return to the Business of a *good Conscience*, from which I have a little digressed, for the clearer reconciling of the several Texts, and for the removing Scruples. No Doubt but a serious considerate Man may know when He behaves as He ought to do, and may reap the Comfort of it: And though We are None of Us without Sin, of one Kind or other, but in many Things we offend All, yea more than We know of (but God knows) yet a *good Life* is easily distinguish'd from the Life of the Ungodly, and a *State of Grace* from a *State of Sin*: And so there is Room enough left for the Joy of a *good Conscience*, where Men live as becometh the Gospel of CHRIST, *perfecting Holiness*, to such a Degree as Man can be perfect, in the Fear of God.

II.

Having thus stated the *Nature*, and clear'd the Meaning of a good *Conscience*, I now proceed to discourse of the *Comforts* of it. These are pointed out, in very expressive Words, by the Apostle in the Text: If our Hearts condemn us not, then have *We Confidence towards God*; and *whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him*. What greater Comfort can there be, than *conscious Virtue*, drawing after it the *Favour*, the *Countenance*, the *Friendship* of God, in Whom all *Happiness* centers, and upon Whom *all Things* entirely depend? If God be with Us, who can be against Us? What Friends can We want, while in Him We have All that are truly valuable? Or what Blessings can We desire, but what He is both willing, and able to shower down upon Us, only leaving it to Him to judge what is safest and most convenient for Us? *Whatsoever* a good Man *asks* in Faith, if it be for his Soul's Health, *That* He is sure to *receive*; as the Apostle in the Text informs Us. Will He ask *Temporal* Blessings? He may, but with Reserve and Caution; not forgetting to add these or the like Words: *Yet not my Will, but Thine be done*. Will He ask rather (as sure He will) *Spiritual* Blessings, as Pardon and Grace, Holiness here, Happiness hereafter? Those He may ask earnestly, absolutely, freely, and without Reserve; and is sure to be heard in doing it, so long as He keeps God's Commandments. There is no Pleasure in Life comparable to That which arises in a good Man's Breast, from the Sense of his keeping up a *friendly Intercourse*, a Kind of familiar Acquaintance with God. I do not mean an *irreverent*, a Kind of *saucy Familiarity*, such as hath been seen in some fawning *Hypocrites*, or *wild Enthusiasts*; and which is as different from the true *filial Reverence*, as the affected Cringings, or nauseous Freedoms of a *Parasite*, are from the open, decent, humble Deportment of a *respectful Admirer*. The Text expresses a good Man's Comfort, by his having *Confidence towards God*: And in the next Chapter, the same Apostle says: *Herein is our Love made perfect, that We may have Boldness in the Day of Judgment*, or against the Day of Judgment: *Because as He is, so are We in this World*: That is to say, We are in the *same Interests* with Him, are his Retainers, and Domestics of his Family and Household. The Apostle adds; *There is no Fear in Love*; but *perfect Love casteth out Fear*: *Because Fear hath Torment*.*

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* 1 John iv. 17, 18.

I have cited these other Texts for the clearer apprehending of what the *Confidence towards God* means. To make it still plainer, I may add, that, like as a dutiful and obedient Child, conscious of a Parent's Love, and of the reciprocal Affection there is between Them, approacheth not with fearful Looks or down-cast Dread, but comes with Smiles in his Countenance, and Joy in every Gesture; so a *truly good Man* appears in God's Presence, under a joyous Sense of the divine Love towards Him, and has none of those dreadful Apprehensions which *guilty Men* have, or ought to have, as often as They come before Him. An *awful Distance* there ought indeed to be between the *Creature* and his *Creator*: But where an Union of Wills and Affections has made Us as it were One with CHRIST, Who is essentially One with God, then that *awful Distance* brings no Torment with it, but rather fills the Mind with *inexpressible Joy* and Admiration.

Tho' St. JOHN has said, that perfect Love casteth out *Fear*; yet St. PAUL has said, *Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*† How shall we reconcile the seeming Difference? It may be reconciled thus: St. JOHN by *Fear* meant a tormenting Fear; for He observed, that *Fear*, such as He spake of, *bath Torment* in it: But St. PAUL understood by *Fear*, that Kind of *Filial Fear* tempered with *Love*, which has no such Torment in it. St. PAUL, in the same Place where He speaks of working out our Salvation with *Fear* and *Trembling*, immediately adds: *For, it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good Pleasure.*† Observe, how comfortable a Reason He assigns for *Fear* and *Trembling*, sufficient, One would think, to remove all melancholy Fears, Doubts, or Diffidence: And so it is. But Who can think of the immediate Presence of the Tremendous Deity, without some Trembling Awe and Concern upon his Mind? Whenever God has been pleased to signify his Approach by visible Symbols and sensible Appearances to frail Mortals, They have instantly been filled with Dread and Horror. The Prophet DANIEL upon such Occasions, sunk down into a Trance;§ and even the Apostle JOHN fell down as dead for a Season.* So dreadful are the Approaches of the Divine Majesty, tho' coming in Love, when made in a sensible Way, in some dazling and glorious Form. But when God comes to Us to make his Abode with us,|| and to work within us (which He certainly does, because He has so promised) we feel no sensible Emotions: Because neither the

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† Philip. ii. 12.

† Philip. ii. 13.

§ Dan. viii. 17, 18.---x. 9.

* Revel. i. 17.

|| Joh. xiv. 23.

Senses nor the Imagination is struck by any outward Appearances, but all is *invisibly* and *spiritually* performed; and there is Nothing but *abstract Thought*, and Christian Recollection that can give us any Notion of the Divine Presence, in such his silent and unseen Approaches. However, a lively Faith in it, and an undoubted Experience of it, may be sufficient to affect a devout Mind with a Kind of trembling Awe of the Divine Majesty conceived to be present, and working in Us: And that Consideration may best account for St. PAUL's Meaning, where He says: *Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling: For, it is God that worketh in You,* and so on. — There is Nothing in This Matter which takes off from the transporting Pleasure of a *clear and good Conscience*, grounded upon the stable Support of a *well-spent Life*, the only sure Anchor to rest upon, and That no otherwise than as it finally rests in the all-sufficient *Merits* of CHRIST JESUS, which alone can supply the Defects of our *own Righteousness*, or render even our best Services accepted.

But the greater the Comfort of a *good Conscience* is, the more solicitous ought We to be, that We proceed upon *sure Grounds*, in the Judgment which We make of our Own Selves; and that We mistake not *Presumption*, or *Self-Admiration*, for true Peace of Mind. Many Marks might be mentioned, whereby to distinguish *One* from the *Other*: But It may suffice to point out *One* which is the *surest* of any; namely, *Growth* in Goodness, *Growth* in Grace. The Progress of the Christian Life is *gradual*; and our highest Attainments here are a still *growing* Perfection. Examine your Title to the Comforts of a *good Conscience* by this Rule, and you shall find It will not deceive You. If We are daily *improving* in Wisdom and *Virtue*, *gaining Ground* of our *Vices* or *Passions* more and more; If We find Our Selves more patient under Adversity, and less puffed up in the Day of Prosperity; If We perceive, that We can bear Affronts, or Injuries with more Calmness and Unconcernedness, and are more disposed than formerly to forget, and forgive; If We have greater Command over our Appetites, and can take Delight in Temperance, Soberness, and Chastity; If, instead of doing Wrong to Any Man, We find Our Selves more and more inclined to Kindness, Friendliness, and Charity; If, instead of hanging back, with Respect to Religious Duties, We find our Relish for them heightened, our Devotions raised, and our Ardors more inflamed; If our Attachments to the
World

World grow weaker and weaker, and our Aspirations towards Heaven every Day stronger and stronger, the nearer We approach to the End of our Race; I say, If We find Matters thus to stand (upon the strictest Enquiry We can make into our Hearts and Lives) then may We, upon sure Grounds, judge favourably of our present State and Circumstances, and may humbly presume that God is in Us of a Truth, and that We are, by the Grace of God, thro' the Merits of CHRIST JESUS, in the High Road to Salvation.





S E R M O N VII.

The *Nature* and *Manner* in which the *Holy Spirit* may be supposed to *operate* upon Us :
And the *Marks* and *Tokens* of such *Operation*.

ROM. VIII. 14.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, They are the Sons of God.

OUR present High Festival,† which is of ancient Standing in the Church of CHRIST, is peculiarly dedicated to the Honour of the *Holy Spirit*, a Divine Person, Partner with the *Father*, and the *Son*, in the one eternal, all-glorious *Godhead*. Divine Wisdom has vouchsafed herein to apprize Us of the Relation We bear to each Person, and the Dependence We have upon Them All, that We also (among other Creatures) may pay our dutiful Homage, and Adoration accordingly.

All the Persons of the *Godhead* are represented, in Sacred Writ, as *jointly concurring* in our *Creation* and *Preservation*, and *jointly contributing*, in mysterious Order, to our *Redemption*, and final *Salvation* : But the present Occasion obliges Me to confine My Self chiefly to What concerns the *Third Person*, his *Presence* with Us, and his kind *Offices* towards Us.

He is set forth, in the New Testament, as our *Comforter* abiding among us,* and as dwelling in us :|| And that, not with

† Whitsunday. * John xvi. 7.—xiv. 16. || 1 Cor. iii. 16.

with respect to our *Souls* only, but even our *Bodies* also, these *Tabernacles of Clay*: For they likewise have the Honour to be considered, as the sacred Temple wherein He is pleas'd to reside.† They are thereby *sanctified*, for the present, and *sealed* also, for the Time to come: *Sealed unto the Day* of their *Redemption*; || that is to say, marked out, and insured for a happy and joyful *Resurrection* to Life eternal. For, as *Many* as are led by the *Spirit of God*, They are the *Sons of God*; and therefore (as soon after follows in the same Chapter) if *Children, then Heirs, and Joynt-Heirs with CHRIST*—that We may be glorified together.* In discoursing farther, it will be proper to shew,

I. What it is to be led by the Spirit; or What it is that the Holy Spirit does for the furthering our Salvation.

III. How, and in what Manner He may be supposed to act, or operate.

III. By what Marks or Tokens it may be seen, that He does operate upon Us; and that We are led by Him.

IV. What is the Use and Improvement which We are concern'd to make of the Whole.

I.

As to the first Particular, which relates to the Spirit's leading Us in our Way to Salvation, it is observable, that our Blessed Lord, taking his solemn Leave of his Disciples, a little before his Passion, consign'd Them, as it were, over to the Care and Guidance of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, Who would guide Them into all Truth,† and would abide with Them, and with the Church after Them, for ever.§ He repeated the same Promise to Them, a little before his Ascension into Heaven, as appears from the History of Acts i. 5. 8.

This, however, is not to be so understood, as if the Holy Ghost were now our sole Conductor, exclusive of the Other Two Divine Persons: For our Blessed Lord, in the very same Place where He promises to send the Comforter to abide with Us for ever, promises also, that the Father and Himself shall make the like Abode with good Christians. If any Man love Me, says He, My Father will love Him, and We will come unto Him, and make our Abode with Him.¶ Elsewhere He promises

† 1 Cor. vi. 19. || Eph. iv. 30. * Rom. viii. 17.
 † John xvi. 13. § John xiv. 16. ¶ John xiv. 23.

mises to his Disciples, his own *spiritual Presence*, to continue with Them, as long as the Church, or the World should last. *Lo, I am with You alway, even unto the End of the World. Amen**. From all which it is plain, that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are *equally present* to good Men, in all Ages of the Church; and that when our Lord spake of his *departing*, and *leaving the World*, He meant it barely of his *bodily Absence*: And because, from the Time of his Ascension, He was to be *present*, only in a *spiritual and invisible Way*, as a *Spirit*, and together with the *Holy Spirit*; therefore He considered his *Church* from thence-forwards, as being *peculiarly* under the Guidance of the *Holy Ghost*; though strictly speaking, it is under the *spiritual Guidance* of *All the Three Persons*. Hence it is, that such *spiritual Guidance* (which often goes under the Name of *Grace*, in the New Testament) is sometimes ascribed to the *Father*, sometimes to the *Son*, and sometimes to the *Holy Ghost*, as it is the *common Work* of All; and may be indifferently, and promiscuously, attributed to *Any* of Them singly, or to *All* of Them together. So We find Mention made, more than once, of the *Grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST*; and of the *Grace of God*, meaning God the FATHER: And yet the HOLY GHOST is emphatically and eminently styled *The Spirit of Grace*, as being, some Way or other, more *immediately* concerned in the Work of Grace, and thereby uniting true Believers both with the *Father* and the *Son*.

Now, for the clearer Conception of What *Grace* means, in this *emphatical* Sense, and of What the *Holy Spirit* does in the *Work of Grace*, upon the Minds of the Faithful; We may distinctly consider it under its several Views, or Divisions.

1. There is a Kind of *illuminating*, or *enlightening Grace* given, as often as the Holy Spirit conveys and instills good Thoughts, wholesome Counsels, or salutary Instructions; opening the Understanding to receive and embrace them. To This Head belongs what the Psalmist says: *Open Thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law*†. And in the New Testament it is recorded, that The Lord opened the Heart of LYDIA, that She attended unto The Things which were spoken of PAUL‡. It is the Spirit, that gives us true Light, and likewise gives it Reception.

2. There is also a kind of *sanctifying Grace*, when the Holy Spirit of God rectifies the Heart, inclines the Will, and meliorates the Affections: For, it is God that worketh in Us

both

* Matth. xxviii. 20.

† Psal. cxix. 18.

‡ Acts xvi. 14.

both to Will and to do, of his good Pleasure;† as St. PAUL testifies. This *sanctifying Grace* is commonly distinguished into three Parts or Branches, called *preventing, assisting, perfecting*; being considered, *first*, as laying the early Seeds of that spiritual Life; *next*, as contributing to its Growth and Progress; and *lastly*, as adding the *finishing Hand* to it.

3 There is one *peculiar Work* of the Spirit, which, tho' it may be reduced to One or Other of the three Heads of *preventing, assisting, or perfecting Grace* (as before mentioned) may yet deserve some *special Notice* here: And That is, The Grace of true Devotion, attended with deep *Compunction* of Heart. St. PAUL speaks of it in the Epistle to the Romans, in these Words: *The Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities; for We know not What We should pray for as We ought: But the Spirit it self maketh Intercession for Us, with Groanings which cannot be uttered.*‡ That is to say, The Holy Spirit of God, working within, sometimes strikes the Mind of good Men with such *Ardency* of Devotion, and such vehement *Compunctions*, that their Hearts are too full to utter What They think; and so, for the present, They are not able to vent the pious Breathings of their Souls in any other Way, than That of Sighs and Groans. The Holy Spirit is the *impulsive Cause* of all such religious *Ardors*, such strong *Convulsions* of godly Remorse, or godly Affection; it is the *Work of God* upon the humble Minds.

These few Hints may suffice to give You some *general Idea* of the *Work of Grace*, or of What the Holy Spirit does for the furthering the *spiritual Life* here, in order to our *Salvation* hereafter.

II.

The next Enquiry is, *how*, or in *what Manner*, He may be conceived to *operate*, and to *effectuate* what He does?

In this Enquiry We ought to proceed with all becoming Modesty and Reverence; since We are not able perfectly to unfold the *mysterious Workings* of the tremendous Deity upon the Spirit of Man. But, one Thing We are certain of, in the general, that Whatever is ordinarily done of this Kind, is done in a *gentle, moral, insinuating Way*, and not by *mechanical, irresistible Impulses*, such as would take away *Human Liberty*, or reduce Men to a sort of *intelligent Clockwork*, or *reasoning Machines*: For, upon that Supposition, every good Word, or Thought would be so *entirely God's*, that no Part of it would be *Ours*; and so all our *Virtue* would be mere

Force

† Philip. xi. 13.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.

Force upon Us (and therefore no *Virtue of Ours* at all) and there would be no Room left for the numberless Exhortations to Well-doing, which *Scripture* so much abounds with, nor for any proper Title to future Rewards. It is manifest therefore that the *Operations* of God's *Holy Spirit* upon Us, only prepare Us for Godliness, or incite Us and enable Us thereto; the rest must come from *Our selves*. Accordingly, *Scripture* always supposes, that, notwithstanding any the strongest *Interpositions* of Grace, Men are still left capable of resisting the *Holy Spirit*,* and Grieving the *Holy Spirit*,§ and even quenching the *Holy Spirit*. For, the *Holy Spirit* moves and inclines only, and does not compel: He leads and conducts as Many as will be led and conducted by Him; but does not so forcibly attract Them, as to over-rule all stubborn *Resistants*, or reluctant Perverseness. God has provided no Remedy for malicious *Wickedness*, and proud *Obstinacy*: But in such Cases, the *Holy Spirit* commonly retires and withdraws, leaving the Incurable and Incurable to Themselves, and to their own certain Destruction.

If We may presume to be a little more particular upon so awful a Subject, it seems that the *Holy Spirit* of God works upon the Minds of Men by proper Applications to their Reason and Conscience, to their Hopes and Fears; suggesting to Them What is right and good, and laying before Them, in a strong Light, the Happiness which they may attain to by Obedience, and the Misery consequent upon Disobedience. And I may add, that one very considerable Article of Divine Wisdom and Goodness lies in the providential ordering all Human Affairs, in such a Manner, as may most fitly serve the Purposes of Grace; not preserving good Men altogether from Temptations, (for, How then should They improve in Virtue, without the Exercise proper for it?) but so restraining, limiting, and governing the Temptations, that They shall not press harder, or continue longer, than may best answer the End and Design of God's permitting them. Let This suffice, in the general, with respect to the ordinary Methods of Grace, and the Manner of the Spirit's operating. It consists partly, in the outward Direction of all sublunary Affairs, and partly in inward and gentle Applications to the Minds of Men, suited to the Times, Seasons, and Circumstances before provided.

There have been Instances of other Methods of Grace, which may be called extraordinary; as was once seen in the miraculous Conversion of 3000 Persons at once; and again more particularly, in the miraculous Conversion of St. PAUL.

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OF

* Acts vii. 51.

§ Ephes. iv. 30.

Of such Cases it is observable, that, tho' the *outward Means* were *miraculous*, and certainly *effectual* with all who were *fittly disposed*; yet even *there*, the *inward Grace* was not absolutely *irresistible*. PAUL was a *religious* well-disposed Man before his *miraculous Conversion*, and only wanted *new Light* and a *better Direction*. The *outward Call*, in that Case, was *miraculous*: But the *inward Grace* which went with it, was no Other than What *might* have been *resisted*, and *would* have been *resisted*, had it fallen upon a *perverse Temper*, and a *stubborn Heart*. St. PAUL Himself intimates as much, where, speaking of Himself, He says: *Whereupon, O King AGRIPPA, I was not disobedient unto the Heavenly Vision.** He *might* have been *disobedient*; but He chose to *obey*, being, in the main, a Person of good *natural Probity*, and not under the Dominion of any *malicious Wickedness*, or *stubborn Passions*. We do not find that any *Miracles* could convert the hardened *Pharisees*, or *Sadducees*, or SIMON MAGUS: And though ELYMAS the *Sorcerer*, was *miraculously* struck blind, yet it had no *Saving Effect* upon his Heart. There is a *certain Degree of Obstinacy*, which the *Grace of God* extends not to, or attempts not to conquer. *My Spirit shall not always strive with Man*, said God, with respect to the *old World*.† They were gone too far, to be curable by the *ordinary Methods of Grace*: And an All-wise God would not send Them an *irresistible Grace* (which had been improper) to *convert* Them; but He sent a *Flood to destroy* Them: So in the Case of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, He attempted not, by any *ordinary* or *extraordinary Grace*, to *reclaim* Them; but rain'd down *Fire* and *Brimstone* from Heaven, to *consume* Them. The Reason of all which is, that Men, considered as *Free-agents*, must be reformed by the *gentler Measures*, or none: If they will not be *led by the Holy Spirit of God*, They shall not be *driven*, because then their *Virtue* would have Nothing of *Choice* in it, and consequently would be *no Virtue* at all, in any proper Sense of the Word, nor meet for a *Reward*.—So much for my *second general Head*. I proceed now, *thirdly*,

III.

To enquire, by *what Marks* or *Tokens* We may discern *when* the Holy Spirit operates upon Us, and *when* We are *led* or *conducted* by Him.

The *Marks* or *Tokens* of the Spirit's operating appear chiefly, either in *Checks of Conscience* dissuading us from Evil, or in *goally Motions* inciting us to What is right and good. For, tho' what passes within us of that Kind is not *distinguishable* by

* Acts xxvi. 19.

† Gen. vi. 3.

by the *Manner* of it, from the *natural Workings* of our own Minds; yet *Revelation*, in Conjunction with our enlightened *Reason*, does abundantly assure Us, that every *good Thought*, *Counsel*, and *Desire* cometh from above, and is the Work of *Super-natural Grace* upon the *Heart*.

But before We draw such Conclusion, with respect to any particular Thought which passes within, special Care should be taken, that we proceed upon *sure Grounds* in the forming our Judgment of it: Otherwise, We may be apt to ascribe the *Movings of Fancy*, or mere *Dreams* of our own, to the *Holy Spirit* of God.

Some very good Men, but of a melancholy Cast, have been observed to make it a Rule to Themselves, in Cases of Perplexity, to lean to that Side wherein They find most *Ease* to their own *Minds*; concluding, that the *Peace* which They experience, is it self a *Symptom* of *Divine Direction*. The Rule is a good *general Rule*; because, in most Cases, a Man's own *Mind* is his best *Counsel*, in judging of right and wrong, of good and evil. But yet sometimes it happens, that a Person may be under the Influence of unperceived *Prejudices*, or *Passions*, which warp Him to a Side, and lay a *Bias* upon Him: And therefore there is no safe and certain Rule to go by, in such Cases, but a strict Examination into the *Nature* and *Quality* of the *Action*: And if, upon cool Reflexion, We find that What We are inwardly *dissuaded* from, is really *evil*, or What We are inwardly *prompted* to is really *good*, then may We *safely* and justly ascribe such *Movements* to The *Holy Spirit* of God.

As to our judging of our *whole Conduct*, and whether, or how far, We are therein moved or conducted by the Holy Spirit, We have a safe Rule to go by; namely, the Rule of God's *Commandments*. *Whoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin*;* that is, doth not allow Himself in any known *sinful Habit* or *Practice*. *He that keepeth God's Commandments (as St. JOHN observes) dwelleth in God, and God in Him.*† St. PAUL also to the same Purpose says; that, if *We live in the Spirit*, We shall *walk in the Spirit*.‡ And because such Walking is best seen by the *Fruits*, He enumerates the *Fruits of the Spirit*, in the same Place: *The Fruit of the Spirit* (says He) is *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance*.§ In short, the only *sure Marks* and *Tokens* of our being conducted by the Spirit of God, are a serious and stedfast *Belief* of what the same Spirit hath taught Us, and a conscientious *Obedience* to all the *Laws of the Gospel*.

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IV.

* 1 John iii. 9.

† Gal. v. 25.

† ——— iii. 24.

§ ——— v. 22, 23.

IV.

I pass on to the *Fourth* and last Particular, namely, The *Use* and *Improvement* to be made of the *Whole*.

1. One great *Use* is, to be ever mindful of the *World* of *Spirits* whereunto We belong; and particularly of that *Blessed Spirit*, Who *presides* over Us, and whose *Temple* We are, while We behave as becomes Us. We are used to look upon Our Selves as the very *lowest Order* of intelligent Beings, and perhaps very justly: But yet I know not what other *Order* of *Creatures* there is which can boast of *higher Privileges* than We; while God the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost* vouchsafe to make their *Abode* with Us, and to accept even of our earthly *Bodies* (while clean and undefiled) as their *common Temple* to dwell in.

This Consideration, by the Way, may serve to shew Us the Folly of All Those, Who have thought it *below* the *Divine Majesty* to take upon Him *Flesh* and *Blood*, and have made That their Pretext for disputing the *Divinity* of our *Blessed Saviour*. For, if it is not *below* the *Majesty* even of God the *Father*, to abide, in some Sense, with *Flesh* and *Blood*; How can it be thought *beneath* the *Dignity* of God the *Son*, to take our *Nature* upon Him? Besides, true *Essential Majesty* can suffer no *Detriment*, can never be *impaired* by any gracious *Condescensions*: But the greater the *Divine Condescension* is, the brighter is the *Glory*: Therefore All the *Three Persons* of the *eternal Godhead* have *condescended* to dwell, in *godlike Manner*, even with *mortal Man*. Should not This Consideration move Us to set the less *Value* upon *Things below*, and to elevate our *Affections* to *Things above*?

2. Another *Use* to be made of the present Meditation, is, to be ever mindful of putting up our *devout Prayers* to the *Throne of Grace*, that the *Spirit* of God may always dwell with Us, and never depart from Us: But then, to make our *Prayers* the more *effectual*, We should take Care to avoid all such *evil Practices* as may offend, or grieve the *Holy Spirit* of God, and move Him to desert Us, or to grow estranged from Us.

3. Thirdly, and lastly, since the *Benefit* of all depends, at length, upon our own *willing Compliance*, and *hearty Endeavours*, let Us make it our *constant Resolution* to attend the *Motions*, and to obey the *Suggestions* of God's *Holy Spirit*; and so to work out our own *Salvation* with *Fear* and *Trembling*. While God works in Us, and for Us, We must also work for Our selves; or else his *Grace* is sent in vain. Therefore, tho' the *Psalmist* prays to God, to create in Him a *clean Heart*, and

a new Spirit; & yet elsewhere God Himself, speaking to his People, says, *Cast away from You all your Transgressions, make You a new Heart and a new Spirit.*|| So then a good Heart and a good Life are God's *Work*, and they are our *Work* also: They are a Mixture, or Compound of *Both*. God will never fail to perform *His Part*, provided only that We are not wanting in *Ours*. Use We therefore first, the *appointed Means* of Grace (appointed by God) such as *Hearing, Reading, Praying,* and receiving the Holy *Communion*; for These are the *ordinary Instruments* of Grace, the *Conduits or Channels*, in and by which God *conveys* it. Take we Care to *comply* with, and *obey* the Grace of God *once received*, and to bring forth the *Fruits* of it in our Lives and Conversations.

§ Psal. li. 10.

|| Ezek. xviii. 30. 31.





S E R M O N VIII.

The Springs and Motives of *false Pretences* to the *Holy Spirit*; with the *Rules* and *Marks* of trying and detecting them.

I JOHN IV. 1.

Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God.

OUR present Festival* is the Memorial of the awful coming of God's *Holy Spirit* upon the Apostles, pursuant to our Lord's Promise; and is particularly dedicated to the Honour of that Divine Person, the *Third Person* of the adorable Godhead. Him We ought to honour in every Way that either Sacred Writ, or our own enlightened Reason hath pointed out to Us: More particularly, in guarding with utmost Care, against all *Abuses* of that High Name; against imputing any *fond Fancies*, or *Follies*, or *Frensies* to the Blessed Spirit of God. SIMON MAGUS, disturbed in Head and corrupt in Heart, was ambitious of the *Thing*, for the Sake chiefly of the *Name*; affecting to give it out, that Himself was *some Great One*;|| or *some great Power of God*.† And when He could not obtain it, being altogether unworthy of it, He endeavoured (as We learn from Church-History) to make up with *Fiction* and *Ostentation*, what was wanting in *Fact*; pretending that at some Times He had been the great Oracle or Representative of God the Father to the *Samaritans*, and at other

* Whitfunday.

|| Acts viii. 9.

† Acts viii. 10, 13, 19.

Other Times of the Son to the Jews, and again of the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles. So industrious was He to magnify Himself under fair Pretences, thereby hoping to draw the World after Him; as He did some Part of it, gaining Proselytes among the Ignorant, Credulous, and Undiscerning. This Kind of Traffick for Fame was constantly carried on by Some or Other, under some Shape or other, during the first Ages of the Church; and it has been continued in various Ways and in different Forms, through all succeeding Ages, down to this Day. It is one of the most refined Artifices of SATAN's Policy: And God has permitted it for the Trial of his Faithful Servants; that they may be proved and exercised every Way, and may learn to be as much upon their Guard against any Surprize of their Understandings, as against any Seduction of their Wills. It is sufficient, that both the New Testament and Old have given strong, repeated Warnings against every Temptation of that Kind; and have not only commanded Us to stand upon our Guard, in such Cases, but have also laid down Marks and Rules, whereby to discover, and whereby to repel every Wile of SATAN, and every the subtlest Engine amongst all his Devices.

As to this Particular, there are many Cautions against it inserted up and down in the Sacred Writings: And I have here made Choice of one which appears to be as expressive and affecting as any, delivered by St. JOHN, the latest Apostle: Beloved, Believe not Every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether They are of God, and so on. Which Words very plainly pointed at the false Pretenders to the Spirit, appearing in those early Days: Men that vainly boasted of their being filled with the Holy Ghost, instructed extraordinarily from above, illuminated from on high, and commission'd to teach and gather Converts, in Opposition to the truly authorized and regular Ministers. The Apostle does not exhort Us altogether to neglect or pass by every vain Pretender (for then how shall We know whether They are vain, or not?) but He bids us suspend our Faith, and withhold our Assent from Them; and, in the mean while, to try and examine what their boasted Pretences amount to. In discoursing further, my Design is:

- I. To enquire somewhat particularly, into the Springs or Motives from which those false Pretences to the Spirit generally proceed.

II. To consider, by what *Rules* or *Marks* any Pretences of that Kind may be tried, and discovered to be false and vain.

III. To observe, how much it *concerns* every pious and considerate Christian to *make the Trial*, and to be upon his Guard in such Cases.

I.

I am first to enquire, from what *Springs* or *Motives* the false Pretences to the Spirit generally proceed. I have before hinted that *Vain-Glory*, or a Thirst after *Fame*, is often the moving Spring, the most prevailing Motive. But to go a little deeper; *Self-love*, of some Kind or other, is the general Foundation, the Root of all. Many and various are the *Illusions* of *Self-love*; and they often prevail, not only with *Hypocrites*, and Men of double Hearts, but even with well-meaning Persons of honest Minds, but of weak or distemper'd Heads. Were None but ill-designing Men to make false Pretences to the Spirit, The Temptation would be but coarsely laid, and would be less apt to deceive. The Fineness of SATAN's Policy chiefly lies, in making use even of pious, honest, well-meaning, but unwary Persons to work with. God may pity and pardon the Men so made use of for the Trial of Others, if their Ignorance was unconquerable, or their Infirmities unavoidable: If they were naturally half-witted, or half-distracted, God may make Them merciful Allowances: But He will make no Allowances for Persons of better Sense, or stronger Faculties, if They suffer Themselves to be misled by such insatuated Instruments. A warm Zeal for Religion may often go along with Want of Knowledge, or sound Discretion: And Nothing is more common, than for unthinking Men to misreckon their own Talents, and to take false Measures very ignorantly of Themselves. *Self-love* is natural to all Men, and is the abiding Pulse of every One's Heart; Which, if it be not carefully watch'd and guarded, will sometimes grievously impose even upon Wise and Shrewd Men; but much more upon the Careless and Undiscerning. Who does not wish to be One of the Favourites of Heaven, and to be extraordinarily illuminated; or conducted by God's Holy Spirit? Let but a fond *Self-Lover* dwell often and long upon this deluding Thought, and He will be apt by Degrees, especially if otherwise full of Conceit, to fancy Himself so illuminated, and so conducted, as He desires to be: And then every warm Sally of Imagination, or every unusual Emotion in his Breast

Breast (coming perhaps from the *Tempter*, or from his own *fond Dreams*) will immediately be construed as a *godly Feeling*, and an *infallible Mark* of some *Divine Impulse*, some *secret Contact* of God's *Holy Spirit*. When the pleasing Delusion is once indulged thus far, the Man begins presently to fancy Himself a Kind of *Saint* upon Earth, or perhaps an *Apostle*: Or, if the Distemper runs higher (as we have known several Instances) He may conceive Himself *greater* than any *Prophet* of the *Old Testament*, or *Apostle* of the *New*: All *Self Illusion*, and little short of down-right Frenzy!

It is not to be doubted but that Persons of this unhappy Complexion must have some *Colours*, some *Appearances*, whereby to deceive their own Hearts. The *Colours* commonly are some great corporal *Mortifications* and *Austerities*, long *Watchings*, long *Fastings*, and perhaps *immense Pains* taken in *un-commanded Services*, such as God has not required at their Hands. Their submitting to such *painful Services*, They look upon as *infallible Proofs* of their own *Sincerity*, and of some *marvellous Grace* of God: Wherein again, They often deceive their own Hearts, and are not aware of the secret *Workings* and *fond Delusions* of their own *Self-Love*: For, after all, there is not half so much *Self-Denial* shewn in those voluntary *Austerities*, accompanied with *Pride* and *Ostentation*, as there is in a *less-pretending* Conduct, squared by the Rule of God's *Commandments*.

If Persons, suppose, in a *green Age*, by the Practice of those *Austerities*, can once come to *think Themselves wiser*, and *greater*, and every way more considerable as *Teachers*, than the *oldest* and *wisest* and *best-studied* Divines; what a *Compendious* Method is thereby laid of arriving suddenly to deep Learning without Study, and to profound Wisdom without the Pain of Thought! And who would not wish, at so cheap and easy a Rate, and in so short a Time, to come at the Top of their Profession? Especially if neither their *natural Talents*, nor *acquired Furniture*, could afford Them any reasonable Prospect of ever becoming considerable at all in the *common* and *ordinary* Methods. A *forward Ambition*, joined with as much Sloth, and Impatience, may easily prompt a Man to flatter Himself in such a Way: And certainly the *Self-Denial* which He exercises in some religious *Austerities*, is not worth the mentioning, in comparison to the prodigious *Self-Indulgence* which, upon the whole, is manifestly seen in it. It is compounding for Fame, Reputation, and Authority, by a few short voluntary *Penances*, and by making very familiar with the *Holy Spirit* of God; at the same time saving all the

the Weariness of the Flesh felt in *hard Studies*, all the irksome Labour of *Languages, History, and Critical Enquiries*, which are ordinarily requisite to form a *judicious Interpreter* of God's Word, and a *faithful Guide* of Souls. While Others are content to wait for *Wisdom* 'till an advanced Age, and to go on, the mean while, in the slow Methods of Labour and Industry which God has appointed; These Pretenders to the Spirit affect to be *wise at once*, and *wise in a most eminent Degree*, *wise by Inspiration*. Who sees not, that *Laziness*, and *Love of Ease*, and *Self-Flattery*, and Eagerness for an *early Pre-eminence*, may naturally tempt weak Men to such Self-Delusions? I do not say that They themselves are commonly aware of the secret *Springs* by which They are so moved, not being used to cool Reflection, or sober Thought. There are no Charms more delusive than the Charms of *Self-Love*; and the simpler Men are, the less do they perceive them; and the more liable are they to be misled by them. Even Children often discover a great deal of Cunning which their *Self-Love* teaches Them, and which They never reflect upon; neither do they so much as perceive by what Springs They are actuated; though a judicious Stander-by will easily look through it, and as easily account for it: Such may be, such probably is the Case with every *well-meaning* false Pretender to the Spirit. As to subtle and *designing Hypocrites*, I meddle not with their Case: The finest Hypocrisy may soon be discovered, and so is the less apt to deceive much, or long: But the *well-meaning* Pretenders to the Spirit, who through a secret *Self-Flattery*, and a Cast of Melancholy, first deceive *Themselves*, are, of all Men, the best fitted to deceive Other Persons. Their artless *Simplicity*, together with their *heartly and affectionate Professions*, are very apt to win upon the best-natured and best-disposed Christians, which the *Tempter* knows full well; and He never exercises a deeper Policy, or gains a greater Triumph, than when He can thus decoy Some of the most religious of God's Servants, deluding Them in a pious way, and, as it were, foiling Them with their own Weapons. But let every considerate Christian, in such Cases, call to mind the good Advice of the Text; first, to *try and examine* the Spirits pretended, whether they are *of God*. We are not commanded to examine, whether the Pretenders are *Sincere Men*, or *Hypocrites*: That may often be doubtful, and it may be hard to pass any certain Judgment upon the Case: Besides, that it does not so much concern Us. For, *our Fault* will not be the *less*, whether We are misled by a *designing Hypocrite*, or a *blind Zealot*, or a *raging Enthusiast*. Care must be taken,

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not to be misled by Any; neither by the *cunning Craftiness* of One, nor by the *Simpleness* of Another, nor by the *Madness* of a Third. But we must try and examine the *Pretences* of Each, and guard equally against All. I proceed therefore to my *second Head* of Discourse, namely,

II.

To consider by what *Rules* or *Marks* any *Pretences* of that kind may be tried, and detected to be false and vain.

1. *Boasting* and *Ostentation* are a flat *Contradiction* to the very supposal of the ordinary *Graces* boasted of; because *Humility* and *Modesty* are the very *chief Graces*, upon which all the rest hang. If a Man thinks Himself endowed with the *Graces of the Spirit*, let Him shew it in his *meek Deportment*, and by his *good Works*: But let Him not trumpet the *Fame* of it through the World, lest his *very doing it* should be taken for a *Demonstration* that He has not the *Spirit of God*; but that some *Spirit of Delusion* has crept in, in his Stead. For, as a Man, by *boasting* of his *good Breeding*, does, in that very Act or Instance, prove Himself *ill-bred*; and, in *boasting* of his *Wisdom*, shews his *Want* of it; so a Man, who presumes to *boast* of the *Grace of the Spirit*, betrays his *Want* of *Grace* in that very Instance. Our Blessed Lord rebuked the *Pharisees* for *sounding a Trumpet* before Them in the Synagogues, and in the Streets, that They might have *Glory of Men*, when They did their *Alms*:* But What would He have said to Men, who should be *noising it abroad*, how full they are, not of *one Virtue* only, but of *all Virtues*, and of *all Graces*? For That must be meant by being *full of the Spirit*, if it means any Thing. This Way of *sounding the Trumpet* before Them, to draw the Eyes and Attention of the World after Them (without Miracles to prove their Mission) is much more indecent, and immodest, than what the *Pharisees* did; besides the additional *Profaneness* of making a very irreverent Use of the *tremendous Name* of God's *Holy Spirit*. To be short, You may depend upon it, that a Religion so *noisy*, so *pompous*, so *theatrical*, as what I have mentioned, is very little a-kin to the *humble*, and *modest*, and *unpretending* Religion of CHRIST.

2. Another sure Mark of a *false Spirit*, is *Disobedience to Rule and Order*, *Contempt of lawful Authority*, and especially any *intruding* into what does not belong to Them, or the attempting to *araw off the People of God* from that *regular and standing Ministry* which God has ordained, to follow Teachers set up by their *own Authority*, that is, by no Authority at all. Such *irregular Practices* come not of the *Holy Spirit*. God is

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* Matth. vi. 2.

not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace; as in all Churches of the Saints*. St. PETER's Rule is: Submit your selves to every Ordinance of Man, (that is, lawful Ordinance) for the Lord's Sake†. Indeed, the Apostles had special Commission from God to oppose Human Ordinances, and to disturb the Religions then prevailing, which were false Religions: But they had the Power of working Miracles, which were their Credentials to authorize Them in it, and their Heavenly Warrants for What They did: Otherwise, their Methods of proceeding would have been both unwarranted and vain.

When our pious Reformers, about 200 years ago, went about the restoring Religion to its ancient Purity, They did it in a regular and orderly Way, under the Direction and Countenance of the ruling Powers, and with a due Regard to such a regular Ministry as CHRIST had appointed in his Church. Those excellent Men were indeed full of the Spirit, which appear'd in their wise Counsels and exemplary Conduct, and was visible, in a Manner, to all good Men; unless We may except themselves, whose great Humility and Modesty would scarce permit Them to see Those shining Graces of their own, which could not be hid from the observing World. Under such a regular and authorized Ministry, so justly settled, our Church (God be thanked) has subsisted and flourish'd, and does to this Day: And They who any way presume to disturb that comely Order, or to throw any Contempt upon it; only to draw Disciples to Themselves, cannot be led by the Spirit in such Attempts; except it be a Spirit of Delusion, altogether opposite to the Holy Spirit of God.

What, tho' They pretend to be Ministers of Righteousness, and affect to outvie Others in some Strictnesses of their own (loose all the while in the main Things, which are of the last Importance to Peace, Order, and Unity) is there any thing strange in such Conduct? There were Christian Teachers in the first Age, who vied even with St. PAUL, and affected to set up a stricter and purer Religion than He could pretend to, in Order to bring him under Contempt. But what said He of Them, writing by the Spirit of God? He said thus: Such are false Apostles, deceitful Workers, transforming Themselves into the Apostles of CHRIST. And no Marvel; for SATAN Himself is [sometimes] transformed into an Angel of Light. Therefore it is no great Thing if his [SATAN's] Ministers also be transformed as the Minister's of Righteousness; whose End shall be according to their Works‡. What avail magnificent Words, and smooth Speeches? Perhaps some false Pretenders may labour earnestly

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* 1 Cor. xiv. 33. † 1 Pet. ii. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14, 15.

to convert Men from *Gluttony* and *Drunkennes*, from *Cursing* and *Swearing*, from *Fornication* and *Adultery*, or the like. Well: What is there of this Kind, which is not done by the regular *Ministry*, and done also in a more regular, and much more edifying Way? But if, while such *Pretenders* endeavour to draw Men off from some *Vices*, They lead Them into others as bad, or worse, namely into *Faction* and *Schism*, into *Sidings* and *Parties*, into a *Contempt* of *Rule*, *Order*, and *Authority*, and into a *Secession* from their proper *Pastors*, their much more knowing and more faithful Guides (besides turning the Minds of the People off unto *Fables* and *Reveries*, instead of wholesome *Truths*, and encouraging Them in the Wantonness of itching Ears); I say, if such *Pretenders* behave in this Way, it will be manifest to all Men Who have their Senses exercised, that They have not the Spirit of God to direct Them in What They do.

3. Another sure Mark of a false Spirit, is the laying down deceitful Rules or Tokens whereby to judge, whether, or when a Man has the Spirit of God. There have been Many, both in former and later Times, who have laid great Stress upon I know not what *sensible Emotions*, or *violent Impulses*, coming upon Them at Times, which They boldly and rashly impute to the *Holy Spirit*; presuming also to date their *Conversion* or *new Birth* (as They call it) from such fanciful Impressions. There is not one Syllable in Sacred Writ, to countenance the Notion of such *Impulses*: It is all mere *Fiction*, *Invention*, *Presumption*, and exceeding dangerous in its Issue or Tendency. For, by that blind Rule, a Man may very easily mistake the *Suggestions* of SATAN, for *Divine Impulses*: Therefore, if They do indeed feel any *Emotions* extraordinary, the first and most important Enquiry is, whether those *Emotions* are not really SATAN's *Illusions*, rather than *Divine Impressions*; or whether they are not rather Marks of *Possession*, than of *Inspiration*? Confidence is no Argument in a dark Affair: But it is the grand Deceiver's Artifice to hoodwink forward Men in a *Blind Presumption*, and to blow Them up into an Assurance beyond their Evidence.

There is but one certain Rule whereby to know when We are led by the Spirit; and That is, the Rule of God's Commandments. When We so think, and so do, as the Spirit of God has directed in God's Holy Word, then, and then only, are We sure that We are led by the Spirit, or born of the Spirit. St. JOHN has said all in a very few Words: *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit Sin*; that is, doth not allow Himself in any

any known sinful Practices. *There* is the *Mark*, and the only true *Mark* of *Regeneration*, and of the *spiritual Life*. Let every Man examine Himself by *this Rule*: And when They can, upon *sure Grounds*, speak *Peace* to their own Consciences, then let Them attribute the *Glory* of it to God's *Holy Spirit*, for That is right: But let Them not *blaze it out* to the World, however certain They are of it; for That will be seeking *Honour of Men*, and endeavouring to *share* with the *Holy Spirit* in that *Glory* which belongs to *Him only*; and it will be *forfeiting the Favour* of that very *Spirit* whereof They so *proudly boast*. The *Spirit* has not given us leave to boast of his Favours for our own *Glory*, or *Fame*; much less to do it for the *Sake* of *Pre-eminence*, or to make Others look less in *Comparison*. Such *Affectation* of *Pre-eminence* cometh not from above, but is a sad *Token*, yea, and a *fatal Symptom* of an *earthly*, and a *sensual Spirit*.

I am aware, that the *false Pretenders* to the *Spirit* have often laid hold on that Text of St. JOHN, warping it unnaturally, so as to draw it to favour their own *fond Delusions*. They first take for granted, that They are *born of God* (which is their *fond Presumption*) and then They conclude that they are *without Sin*. This is vilely perverting and abusing the Text: For They ought first to know, that their *Ways are right*, and then to draw their *Conclusion*; and not vainly to *presume first* that They have the *Spirit*, and then from thence to conclude that their *Ways are right*. But such has often been the *Self-delusive Method* of *vain Pretenders*; And They have sometimes carried it so far as to argue, that since they are *Saints*, and *born of God* (that is, in their own *fond Imagination*) They cannot be guilty of *Sin*; but let Them do What They please, the *Spirit* is to warrant and *sanctify* all; for *God sees no Sin in his Saints*. This is turning the Tables much in the same Way as the *Romanists* have often done with respect to their pretended *Infallibility*. Give them a thousand plain Proofs that They have erred, and do err; and They will answer all by telling you, that They cannot err. In like Manner, tell some *false Pretenders* to the *Spirit*, that They are guilty of such and such manifest *Iniquities*, and prove it upon Them by plain *Evidence of Fact*, They will persist in it, that They cannot sin, because (which is their *Vanity*) They are, in their own Conceit, *born of God*, and *led by the Spirit*. How dangerous a Principle This is, how productive of all *Ungodliness*, and of the most shocking *Impieties*, was too sadly seen in the *last Century*, and stands upon Record in the *Histories* of those *distracted Times*. But enough hath been said of the *Rules* or *Marks*

Marks whereby to try and detect every false Pretender to the Spirit.

III.

And now, for an *Application* of the whole, give Me leave briefly to suggest, how much it concerns Us to be upon *our Guard* in such Cases.

Religion, like all other weighty Concernments, is best carried on in the calm, regular, and sedate Way; and therefore great Care should be taken, to keep up the old and well-tried Methods, rather than to change them for new Devices, which will never answer. If Sinners will not listen to the *Spirit of God* speaking by the *Scriptures*, and by a *regular Ministry*, They will not listen to the same Spirit supposed (but vainly supposed) to speak in the *undigested, incoherent, extemporary Effusions* of *raw Teachers*. It is easy for warm Zealots of distemper'd Minds to throw Reflections upon the wiser and more considerate Guides, Who come not up to *Their Degrees of unnatural Heat and Ferment*: But a small Knowledge of Mankind will suffice to shew, that They Who will not be converted by the cool, calm, rational Methods, will never be wrought upon, as to any good and lasting Effect, by Eagerness and Passion. If Sinners, wedded to their darling Vices, will not be *regularly reasoned* into a Change of Life, We must not become as mad in one Way as They are in another, in Hopes to recover Them to their Senses: For That, instead of reclaiming, would but harden Them so much the more. The World indeed, generally, is bad enough, always was, and always will be: But still We must not take upon Us to use any *affected and unjustifiable Methods* in order to mend it; Which in reality would not mend it, but make it worse. We must bring Men to God, in *God's own Way*, if we hope to compass it at all. The making use of *wrong Means* for the Sake of a *good End*, is Nothing else but *doing Evil* that *Good may come*; which is a dangerous and detestable Practice.* I say then, that when the Ministers of CHRIST have done all that is prudent and proper, and the Effect does not answer, They must not run wild Lengths, in order to gain their Point: For, God will say to such Persons, if You could not prevail by Methods of *My Appointment*, How could you hope to do it by *wreak Devices of Your Own*? You have run wide, and far, to make Proselytes: But who sent you? or who required it at your Hands?—There is as much Mischief in over-doing, as in under-doing; Both are equally Transgressions of the Divine Laws,

* Rom. iii. 8.

Laws, and Deviations from the Rule of Right. Are They eager and impatient to bring Sinners to a sober Life? It is well They are, and We commend Them for it: But there is one Thing of still greater Importance to Them, which ought to be attended to in the *first* Place, which is, to rest content with *God's appointed Methods* of reforming the World, and to proceed no farther than He has given Leave; to make use of *sound Judgment* and *Discretion* in an Affair of that *high Concernment*; and to submit to stop where God requires it, as well as to run on where He has sent: Otherwise, Religion will not be promoted, but greatly obstructed and exposed: And the World will not be made wiser or better, but ten times wilder than before.

These Things I have here laid before You in as plain Words, and in as strong a Light, as I could.

May That *Divine Spirit*, whereof I have been speaking, dwell richly in Us, in all Wisdom, and in all Virtues and Graces; particularly, in *Soundness of Mind*, and in *Humility of Heart*, and in *Purity of Life* and Manners. Such are the *Fruits*, such the *Marks* of the *Spirit's Presence* with Us, and of his Love towards Us: Which, that We may evermore plentifully enjoy, here and hereafter, God of his Mercy grant, through our Lord and Saviour **JESUS CHRIST. Amen,**





S E R M O N IX.

The precise Nature of the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

MATT. XII. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, all Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men: But the Blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST shall not be forgiven unto Men.

And Whosoever speaketh a Word against the SON OF MAN, it shall be forgiven Him: But Whosoever speaketh against the HOLY GHOST, it shall not be forgiven Him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.

THESE Words will lead Me to treat of the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*; a Matter which has been much talk'd of, and not always rightly understood: For which Reason, I the rather chuse to discourse upon it.

It will be convenient, in the *first Place*, to observe How, and upon *what Occasion*, the Words of the Text were brought in. We have an Account in this Chapter, of our Lord's healing a blind and dumb Man Who had been possessed by a Devil. The *Scribes and Pharisees* Who came from *Jerusalem*, and observed what was done, very maliciously attributed that great Miracle, which our Lord had wrought by the *Spirit of God*, to the Assistance of the Devil. *This Fellow*, said They (speaking in Contempt of Him) *doth not cast out Devils; but by BEELZEBUB, the Prince of the Devils.* Our Blessed Lord, well knowing the Spite and Venom of that execrable Calumny, takes Them up roundly for it; first confuting their Cavils, and next, rebuking their Insolence, in very plain

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Matt. xii. 24.

plain and strong Terms. He puts Them in mind how absurd and contradictory to common Sense it must be, to imagine that the Devils should be no wiser than to differ and disagree among Themselves, in a Matter relating to their common Interest, which would be destroying their own Kingdom. *If SATAN cast out SATAN, — how shall then his Kingdom stand* ?* — After This, He retorts their own Calumny upon Them, in order to manifest their grievous Partiality and Self-Condernnation. *If I by BEELZEBUB cast out Devils, by Whom do your Children (your own Friends, the Exorcists) cast them out † ?* If They cast out Devils by the help of God, calling on the God of ABRAHAM; why am I, who do the same Things, and greater, in the Name of the same God, charged with doing them by the help of the Devil? He goes on to a third Consideration drawn from the Nature of his Doctrine, and from the whole Tenour of his Life and Conduct, as being directly opposite to the Devil's Interests, and plainly shewing, that He was so far from being a Confederate with BEELZEBUB, that He was his most avowed and formidable Enemy; binding that strong Prince in Chains, rising his House, and spoiling his Goods. These Things being plain and undeniable, what unaccountable Malice must it be in the Pharisees, and how grievous their Sin, to impute the Miracles wrought by a Divine Power, to the Prince of the Devils? Our Blessed Lord therefore closes his Reply with this smart and tremendous Rebuke: *Wherefore I say unto you, that all Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men: But the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven, — neither in this World, neither in the World to come.*

The Phrases and Idioms of Speech (here made use of) may require some Explanation, before We come to the Matter contained in them. *All Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven.* The Words are not to be taken absolutely, as if all Kinds of Slanders and Calumnies should be forgiven; (for many, without Question, while unrepented of, never will be forgiven) but they are to be understood comparatively, as amounting to This; that all other unrighteous blaming or censuring, either of Things or of Persons, shall sooner and more easily be forgiven, than the blaming and slandering the Holy Spirit of God, that is, God Himself. To revile Angels, or Men, is tolerable, and pardonable in Comparison: But to strike higher still, and to revile even God Himself, is an unpardonable Impiety. *Whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man,* (against CHRIST considered merely as a Man) calling

calling Him, for Instance, a *Deceiver*, a *Glutton*, a *Wine-bibber*, and the like; *That*, tho' a grievous Sin in it self, yet being slight in Comparison, may the more easily be forgiven: *But whosoever speaketh against the HOLY GHOST, it shall not be so easily forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come.* In discoursing farther, my Design is,

I. To examine *what the Sin, or Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost means*, and wherein *precisely* it consists: Where, by the Way, I shall take Notice also of some *erroneous Accounts* of it.

II. I shall consider the *heinous Nature* and *Aggravations* of it, together with the *Penalty* attending it, or consequent upon it.

III. I shall enquire whether any Sins committed at this Day are the *same thing* with it, or *which* come the *nearest* to it.

I.

I am to examine *What the Sin, or Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost means*, and wherein *precisely* it consists.

I said Sin or Blasphemy against the *Holy Ghost*, because Some call it *the Sin against the Holy Ghost*, tho' Scripture it self never calls it any Thing else but *Blasphemy*; which is worth the observing. For from thence We may be assured, that This Sin (whatever it be) ought to be reckon'd among the *Sins of Speech*, among the Offences of the *Tongue*. All the Sins which Men commit are reducible to three Heads, as being either in *Thought*, in *Word*, or in *Deed*: Now, the Blasphemy against the *Holy Ghost* can properly be referred to the *Second* only of the three now mention'd; it lies in *Words*, is committed by *Speaking*, and particularly by *Evil-speaking*; by *reviling* and *defaming* the *Holy Spirit* of God. In the Text, it is called *speaking against the Holy Ghost*. And by St. MARK, it appears that the Sin consisted in something which the *Pharisees* said: For it is there remarked as the Sum and Substance of the Guilt They were chargeable with, that *They said of Jesus, that He hath an unclean Spirit* * And it is farther observable, that our Blessed Lord, in the Close of his Discourse upon that Occasion, pronounces thus: *Every idle Word that Men shall speak, They shall give Account thereof in the Day of Judgment* †. Idle Words here mean malicious,

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* Mark iii. 30.

† Matth. xii. 36.

or *impious Expressions*; alluding still to the main Subject of his Discourse, the *spiteful and opprobrious Words* which the *Pharisees* had impiously thrown out against the *Spirit of God*. To be short then, the *Sin*, or *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, was the *belying, slandering, or reviling the Divine Spirit* by which our Lord wrought his Miracles, ascribing them to the *Devil*.

There may be, and there have been several *Offences* committed against the *Holy Ghost*, which yet do not amount to the *Blasphemy against Him* specified in the Text. There is such a Thing as *grieving the Holy Spirit**, and *quenching the Spirit*†, when Men refuse to hearken to his Counsels, to follow his Motions, or to obey his Calls: But *This* is not *blaspheming Him*. There is also what St. STEPHEN calls *resisting the Holy Ghost*‡, which is opposing Him with an high Hand, and rebelling against Him, and is a very heinous Sin; and yet neither is *That* the same with *blaspheming* and *slandering Him*, which is what those PHARISEES were guilty of. ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA grievously affronted the *Holy Ghost* in telling Him a Lie, either presuming upon his *Ignorance* as not knowing it, or upon his *Patience* as if He should have connived at it: But yet, *That* was not so bad as What the *Pharisees* did in ascribing his *Works* to the *Devil*. The malicious telling a Lie of Him, to *defame and slander Him*, was a more heinous *Offence* than the telling a Lie to Him, under a weak and foolish Persuasion. There is also another Way of *affronting the HOLY GHOST*, by *vilifying his Operations*; which yet comes not up to the Sin of the Text. Upon the Day of *Pentecost*, when the Disciples, full of the *Holy Ghost*, began to *speak with other Tongues*, as the Spirit gave them *Utterance*, there were Some standing by, who mocking said, *these Men are full of new Wine*, vilifying the *Operations of the Spirit*, as the Effects of *Drunkenness*: But the Men who said it, said it perhaps *wantonly or ignorantly*, rather than *spitefully or maliciously*. They might not know that the Disciples really spake with other Tongues; but being unacquainted Themselves with the Languages then spoken, They took them all to be *Jargon*, such as Men might utter under some Disorder of Mind, occasioned either by Wine, or by Frenzy: And so They accounted (as They thought) for the Thing in a natural Way, not suspecting any Thing supernatural in it. But the *Pharisees* who are charged with being guilty of *blaspheming the Holy Ghost*, They very well

* Eph. iv. 30. † 1 Thess. v. 19. ‡ Acts vii. 51. † Acts ii. 13.

knew that What They had seen done, could not be accounted for in a *natural Way*; and yet such was their *Spleen* and *Rage* against the Gospel, that they chose rather to impute the Miracles of our Lord to the *Devil*, than to acknowledge the *Divine Hand*, which was so visible in them, that They Themselves could not but see it, had They been at all disposed to it.

I may here also mention SIMON MAGUS, as a Person who very highly *affronted* the *Holy Ghost*, when He *offered Money* for the purchasing his Miraculous Gifts. But neither was That any such direct *Blasphemy* against the *Holy Ghost*, as What the Text mentions: For He had some *Respect* and *Veneration* for the Miracles He saw wrought, and for the *Author* of them; and was very far from imputing them to the Assistance of the *Devil*.

The *Blasphemy* against the *Holy Ghost* was something worse still than any Thing I have yet mentioned: It was *defaming* the *Holy Spirit* of God, and *God Himself*, under the execrable Name of BEELZEBUB; it was *reviling*, and That *knowingly* and *desperately*, the *Divine Works*, as *Diabolical Operations*. In This, as I conceive, and in This *precisely*, consisted that *Blasphemy* which shall *never be forgiven*, the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*.

Nevertheless it must be owned, that many wise and good Men, both Ancient and Modern, have been of different Sentiments in this Article,

Some, with St. AUSTIN, maintaining that *all Sins* are pardonable upon *Repentance*, have resolved the *Blasphemy of the Holy Ghost*, unpardonable Sin, into *final Hardness and Impenitency*: But *final Impenitency* is one Thing, and *Blasphemy* is another: And *final Impenitency* is an Error in a Man's *whole Conduct*; whereas the *Blasphemy* of the Text is *one particular Crime*, and committed by *reviling Words*, as observed above. So that *final Impenitency* is not the Sin here signified: and for the same Reasons We may conclude, that a *total and final Apostasy*, which Some take to be the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*, is very different from it, tho' it is certainly unpardonable as much, or perhaps more than the other.

Some, with ORIGEN and the NOVATIANS of old, have imagined that Sins committed *after Baptism*, are *Sins against the Holy Ghost*: But there is the same Objection, besides many more, against this Opinion, as against the two Former, and it has very long and very deservedly been exploded by all sober Divines.

Some say, that every *malicious resisting*, or opposing the *Gospel-Truths*, when sufficiently propounded, is the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*: But *Infidelity* is one Thing, and *Blasphemy* another: and the *Sin* which the Text censures, consists more in *reviling*, than in *resisting*, as before observed: So that neither is This Account at all satisfactory.

There is one more remaining still, which has been esteemed as highly plausible, and which has met with several very considerable Abettors. It is, that the *holding out obstinately against the last Dispensation*, the *Dispensation of the Spirit*, commencing after *CHRIST's Ascension*, was the *Sin against the HOLY GHOST*. They who maintain this Opinion, are obliged also to maintain, that the *Scribes and Pharisees*, who attributed our Lord's Miracles to the *Devil*, were not *then*, and *therein* guilty of the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*. They plead, that those *blaspheming Pharisees* were not yet *excepted* out of the *general Pardon* offered to as Many as would *repent and believe*; but that our Lord Himself *pray'd for their Forgiveness* upon the Cross, which shews that They were yet *capable of Pardon*. They further add, that the *Holy Ghost was not yet given* 'till our Lord *ascended*, and therefore could not, properly speaking, be *blasphemed before that Time*: and that the *Blaspheming* and *resisting Him then*, being holding out against the very greatest Miracles, the strongest Proofs, and the *last Remedies*, This of Course must be the *most sinful* and provoking *Obstinacy* that could be, and on *that Account* is pronounced *unpardonable*.

These Reasons are specious: But then here is no Account given how it comes to pass, that neither in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, nor in any of the *Epistles*, is there a Word said by way of Reproof, or of *Caution* against *Blaspheming against the Holy Ghost*; and that it should never have been mentioned, but by our Lord Himself at a Time when no body was *capable* of committing it: And yet, by all the Circumstances of our Lord's Discourse at that Time, one would be very apt to conclude, that those *blaspheming Pharisees* were *then* verily guilty of the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*. Nay it seems further, that St. MARK's Comment upon the Case, may be alone sufficient to decide the Doubt. For after reciting our Lord's dreadful Sentence against Such as should blaspheme against the *Holy Ghost*, He immediately adds, *because They said, He hath an unclean Spirit* *. What is This but declaring in so many Words, that the *reviling the Holy Spirit*,

* Mark iii. 30.

Spirit, as an *unclean Spirit*, was the *Blasphemy* our Lord spake of, and was then committed by those blaspheming *Pharisees*?

As to what is objected, that those very *Pharisees* were yet capable of *Pardon*, because our Lord upon the Cross prayed for their *Forgiveness*; It may as reasonably be said, on the other hand, that Those also who rejected the *last Dispensation* of the HOLY GHOST were capable of *Pardon*; for St. STEPHEN prayed for the *Forgiveness* of Those who stoned Him, tho' He had before told Them, that They had *resisted the Holy Ghost* *. This Objection therefore returns upon the *Objectors*, and equally affects either *Their* Interpretation of the Sin against the *Holy Ghost*, or *Ours*. Besides, the Objection goes upon the Supposition that the Blasphemy against the *Holy Ghost* is absolutely unpardonable, which indeed the Text does seem to say: But yet good Criticks have observed, that according to the *Hebrew Idiom*, the Words may, or rather must bear a softer Construction; importing only, that of all Kinds of Slander and Calumny, Slandering the *Holy Ghost* is most *daring* and *impious*; and that any other Calumnies will sooner meet with Pardon than *That* will. But supposing the Sin to be absolutely unpardonable, then it must be said, that our Lord's praying for the *Forgiveness* of his Enemies upon the Cross, is to be understood only of his praying for the *Jews in general*, and not of his praying for *those Persons in particular* Who had been guilty of the unpardonable Sin.

As to the other Objection, that the *Holy Ghost* could not be blasphemed at *that Time*, because He was not yet given; it is of very little Weight. Our Blessed Lord most undoubtedly had the *Holy Spirit* always residing in Him without Limitation or Measure †; And He Himself professes, that it was by the *Spirit of God* that He cast out *Devils* ‡: So that the Blaspheming that *Divine Power* by which He wrought his Miracles, was plainly blaspheming the *Holy Spirit*. It is true that the *Holy Ghost* was not yet given in full Measure to our Lord's *Disciples*, but to our Lord Himself He most certainly was; and therefore the Objection, in this case, is slight, and comes not up to the Point.

Upon the Whole then, I conclude as before, that the Blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST was the imputing our Lord's Miracles to the Devil; and that *That* dreadful Sin was committed by *Those* very Men who so reviled, slandered, and traduced that *Divine Power* by which He wrought Them.

X 4

II. The

* Acts vii. 51.

† John iii. 34.

‡ Matt. xii. 28.

The *Heinousness* of that Sin, which was the *Second Particular* I proposed to go upon, may be competently understood from What hath been already said, and will not need many Words more.

It was a most wicked and impudent Lie and Slander upon the *Holy Spirit*, and was flying, as it were, in the Face of God. One would think, when God Himself interposes, giving the divine Signal in plain uncontested Miracles, that it might become All Men to be mute, and to lay aside their otherwise unconquerable Rancour and Prejudice: But the *Pharisees* were so resolute and so outrageous in reviling every Thing that gave any Countenance to CHRIST and his Gospel, that They would not spare even God Himself, but call'd Him *BEELZEBUB*, spitefully defaming his most divine Works, as being Nothing else but *Diabolical Impostures*. They saw the Miracles of our Blessed Lord, and were very sensible that they were *real* and *true* Miracles: They knew also that they were wrought in *direct Opposition* to the Devil and his Kingdom, having all the fair Appearances possible of being *Divine*: Nor would They have scrupled to have received them as *divine*, had They been wrought by any One else, excepting CHRIST or his Disciples: But such was their invenom'd Hatred and Inveteracy against Him and His, that, at all Adventures, contrary to all Candor or Equity, and in Contradiction to Reason and common Sense, They resolved to *say* however, scarce to *believe* (for They hardly could be so stupid) that He was in *League with the Devil*; and that all his mighty Works, which He wrought in the Name of God, were the Works only of *BEELZEBUB* the Prince of the Devils. There could not be a more insolent Slander, or a more provoking Outrage against the *Divine Majesty*, than This was. All other Calumnies, against *Men*, or against *Angels*, come short of This; for it was calumniating *God Himself*, the tremendous and most adorable Deity; and was done very *maliciously*, and *designedly* to hinder and obstruct, as much as possible, the first planting of the Gospel, to the universal Hurt and Detriment of Mankind: In a Word, it was sacrificing the Honour of Almighty God, and both the present and future Happiness of Men, to their own private Humours and Party-Passions; being resolved to take up with any wretched Cavil, any improbable and self-contradictory Lies and Slanders against God, rather than permit the honest and well-meaning People to believe in CHRIST JESUS upon the brightest Evidence of his Miracles.

Such

Such was the heinous Nature, and the *transcendent Guilt* of *blaspheming* against the *Holy Ghost*, in That Instance; And therefore it is, that our Blessed Lord took so particular Care, first, to *confute the Calumny*, and next, to pass a most *righteous*, but *dreadful Censure* upon the Sin contained in it. The divine Vengeance should pursue a Crime of that deep Die, both in this World, and in the World to come. The Offenders in that Kind, being unreclaimable and incurable, should, by the just Judgment of God, be seal'd up to everlasting Destruction; like PHAROAH, or like JUDAS, like SODOM, or like GOMORRHA, ripe for Perdition, and fit to be delivered over to eternal Ruin.

Having thus largely considered *What the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost means*, and how *heinous a Sin it was*; it remains now only,

III.

To enquire whether any *Sins committed at this Day*, are the *same Thing* with it; or which of them come the *nearest* to it. Of This very briefly, having no Room to enlarge.

1. *First*, for the Sake of the over-tender and scrupulous Consciences, I would observe, that *roving*, and which some call *blasphemous Thoughts*, which rise up *accidentally*, and as *accidentally* go off again, are Nothing a-kin to the Sin which I have been speaking of; which consisted in *premeditated Lies* and *Slanders* against God, form'd with Design to obstruct or darken the Evidences of the true Religion, and to prevent Others from looking into them, or being convinced by them. None but *profess'd Atheists*, or *Infidels*, can be guilty of such *Spite* and *Malice* against the *Gospel-Salvation*. No One, while He *believes the Christian Religion*, and *seriously* professes Himself a *Member of CHRIST's Church*, can be guilty of the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*.

2. I observe, *Secondly*, that even the *Atheists* or *Infidels* of these Times, can scarce come up to the *same Degree of Guilt* with the *Pharisees* of old; because *They* have not *seen* the Miracles of CHRIST with their own Eyes. It is some Mitigation of their Sin, and it makes their Infidelity the more excusable, that *They* have not altogether so *strong* and *glaring* Evidences of the Truth of Christianity, as *Those* had Who lived in the *first Ages*, and *saw the wonderful Works of God*. *Rational* and *Historical Evidence* may be as convincing as the other, when *duly considered*: But, as it strikes not upon the Senses, it does not awaken the Attention, and alarm every Passion of the Soul, in such a Degree as the other does. For which Reason, the Unbelievers of our Times, tho' abandon'd and profligate Men, are not altogether

ther so blameable in the Opposition They make to Christianity, as the Unbelievers of old Time were. They may indeed, at this Day, attribute the *Miracles* of CHRIST and his *Apostles* (Which They read of in credible History) to the Devil, as the *Pharisees* of old did; and This will be *blaspheming the Holy Ghost*: But it will not be *exactly the same Sin*; not the same in *Degree* (tho' in *Kind* the same) because *Circumstances* are *different*; and upon the *Circumstances* depend the *heightening Aggravations*.

Nevertheless, It must be said, that the *obstinate rejecting* the *Miracles* of our Lord and of his Disciples (which have been so *fully attested*) and much more the *ridiculing* and *bantering* them, and the endeavouring to run them down by *Lies* and *Slander* (as the Way of Some is) This is a *very high* and *heinous Crime*, as well as *horrid Blasphemy*; especially if committed in a Christian Country, and in a knowing Age, and where Men have all desirable Opportunities of learning the Truth, as well as the strongest Motives offered for submitting to it. *Scoffers of this Kind* come very little short of the *Pharisees* of ancient Time, either in *Spleen* and *Malice*, or in *Perverseness* and *Hardness of Heart*, or in an impious and desperate *Defiance* to *God* and *CHRIST*, and to the *Holy Spirit* of Both. From such *Blasphemers* turn away, and have Nothing to do with the Tents of these wicked Men, lest ye be consumed in their Iniquities. Look upon Them as Vessels of divine Wrath, Sons of Perdition, prepared for Vengeance, which will either suddenly overtake Them in this World, or will fall the heavier upon Them in a World to come. The Christian Religion has been so abundantly proved and settled by great *Variety of Evidences*, beyond *reasonable Exception*, that all Gain-sayers are now left *without Excuse*. It has had the *concurrent Testimony* of *CHRIST* and his *Apostles*; and Both establish'd by many and great *Miracles*, unparallel'd, and *uncontroull'd*: And were there Nothing else, its *prevailing* and *triumphing* so much, so early, and so long, over *Jewish Superstition* and *Pagan Idolatry*, is it self a *Miracle* as great as any, and manifestly shews that the Finger of God was in it, and that an Almighty Power went along with it. What remains then, but that We learn from all, to set a *just Prize* and *Value* upon This our most holy Profession; evermore defending and maintaining it against all Opposers, and adorning the same, as it becomes Us to do, with suitable Lives and Conversations.

SERMON



S E R M O N X.

The Case of *Deceivers*, and *Deceived*, Considered.

EPHES. iv. 14.

That We henceforth be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby They lie in wait to deceive.

HERE are two Sorts of Persons mark'd out by the Apostle in the Text, the *Deceivers* and the *Deceived*; the One, *subtle and crafty*, and full of *intrigue*; the Other, *easy and credulous*, and *unsuspecting*; the One, supposed to have all the *Williness of the Serpent*, without the *Innecency of the Dove*; the Other, all the *Tameness and Simplicity of the Dove*, without the *Serpent's Wisdom*. Both are *blameable*, tho' in *different Respects*, and not in the *same Degree*; One, for *abusing and misemploying their Talents*, and the Other, for *not employing them at all* to discern between true and false, between Good and Evil. Both are accountable to God as *Delinquents*; One, for *high Contempt*, and the Other, for *great Supineness and Neglect*. The World has never been without both these Kinds of Men, since Men have multiplied upon the Earth, and Sin and Folly have taken Place among Them. The Church of CHRIST, from the Beginning and downwards, has suffered much by Both. *Heresies and Schisms* have disturbed its Peace and broken its Union; while *crafty and intriguing Men* have begun the Quarrel, and *weak credulous Men* have run blindly into it. It was the Design of our Blessed Lord, when He first founded his Church, to prevent, as much as possible, all Confusion and Discord, and to provide for its then present, and future Peace.

With

With this View, as the *Aposile* here in this Chapter observes, He instituted a *Ministry*, and appointed *proper Officers* to instruct his People, and to lead Them in the Way everlasting. He gave *Some, Apostles*; and *Some, Prophets*; and *Some, Evangelists*; and *Some, Pastors and Teachers*; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of CHRIST; till We All come in the Unity of Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, &c*. Such was the Provision made at the first planting of the Church, to preserve its Unity, to bind and cement it together by the Ministry and good Offices of *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers*. The first three Offices lasted for a Time only, and ceased by Degrees, as there was less and less Occasion for Them; but *Pastors and Teachers*, as They will be always needful, so will They be continued always in constant Succession till the End of the World. As there is no *New Church* to form, after the Foundation laid by CHRIST and his *Apostles*; nor any *New Doctrines* to be publish'd beyond what They have taught; so there is no Need of *Officers extraordinary*, such as were *Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists*, after a Church has been once raised, and a Rule fix'd and settled for all Times to come: It is sufficient then to have a *standing Ministry*, in Succession, to preach and publish that Rule, and so to keep up in all After-ages What was once delivered to the Saints.

But, as neither the *Apostles* Themselves, nor *Prophets*, nor our Lord's own Presence with Mankind, was then sufficient to hinder evil-minded Men from sowing Divisions, or unstable Men from running in with them; so neither is it to be expected that the ordinary Ministers, in after Ages, can with all their Endeavours prevent the like Irregularities, supposing Them ever so sincere and intent upon it.

But it is further to be consider'd, that They Themselves are but weak and frail Men, and They have no such infallible Assurances, or Divine Inspirations, as the *Apostles* had, nor are They Proof against such Temptations as are common to Men; so that it is not impossible even for Them to fall from their own Stedfastness, and to desert their Rule; and so in Effect, to become *Deceivers and Seducers*, instead of being proper *Instructors* of the Church of CHRIST. And whenever such Cases as these happen, it is a dangerous Snare to common Christians, Who will be most at a Loss what Course to steer, when the very Guides Themselves differ, and draw contrary Ways. This however is a Case which may be supposed, and which has often appeared in Fact.

* Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13,

Fact. Divine Wisdom has not thought proper to provide any infallible Remedy against it, but leaves it for a Trial of Mens Ingenuity and Sincerity in such Instances; that it may be seen what Care and Pains honest Men will take to inform Themselves right in any doubtful Circumstances, and that They who are approved may be made manifest.—In discouraging farther, my Design is,

I. To consider the Case of *Deceivers*, or Seducers, Who, in their *sight* and *cunning Craftiness*, lie in wait to deceive.

II. To consider the Case of the *Deceived*, Who in their great *Simplicity*, or *Credulity*, are apt to be *tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine*.

III. I shall suggest some *Advices* proper to prevent our falling in with *Either*; concluding with some brief *Application* of the whole, suitable to our present *Circumstances*.

I.

First, I propose to consider the Case of *Deceivers*, or Seducers, Such as, by their *sight*, and *cunning Craftiness*, lie in wait to deceive.

And here it will be proper to enquire, upon *what Motives*, or with *what Views*, Men are led thus to beguile, and misguide Others. The particular *Motives* in such Cases may be many; but they are all reducible to these three Heads, *Pride*, *Avarice*, *Voluptuousness*; that is to say, *Love of Honour*, or *Profit*, or *Pleasure*.

1. To begin with the *first*. There is oftentimes a great Deal of *Pride* and *Vanity* in starting *odd Notions*, and broaching *new Doctrines*. It is pretending to be *wiser* than the Rest of the World, and is thought to be an Argument of *uncommon Sagacity*. Upon this Foot, Some are perpetually in Quest of *new Discoveries*. Nothing pleases Them, if They have not the Honour of *inventing* it, or of *reviving* it in Their Times. It is Objection enough against *common Truths*, that they are *common*, and in Every Body's Hands. There is no *Glory* to be gain'd by traversing this *beaten Road*; it is but *low* and *dull Employment*: But if they can open a *new Way*, and strike out a *new Track* which No Man has discovered; there is the *Triumph*, and the *Exultation*. When once a Man has thus far given a loose to his *Vanity*, and thinks Himself significant enough to be *Head of a Sect*; then He begins, first, to *whisper* out his *choice Discoveries* to a few *Admirers* and

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Confidants, Who will be sure to flatter Him in it; and next, to tell aloud to all the World, how great a Secret He had found out, with the inestimable Value of it. And now at length comes in the Use of slight and cunning Craftiness, and all imaginable Artifices; first, to find out proper Agents to commend and cry up the Conceit; next, to spread it in the most artful Manner among the simple and least suspecting; and after that, to form Interests, and make Parties; and so, if possible, to have a publick Sanction set to it, or a Majority at least contending for it. This frequently is the End and Aim of Novellists and Seducers. They are first, fond of their own Conceits, which is their Pride and Vanity; and next, impatient to make Profelytes, and to draw the World after Them, because every Convert gain'd is a Compliment to their Judgment, and the greater the Numbers are, the greater their Glory. Love of Fame and Glory is a very strong Passion, and operates marvellously in Persons of a warm Complexion. Even St. JOHN the Apostle, with all his Gifts and heavenly Endowments, was slighted by DIOTREPHES, who set up against Him. *I wrote unto the Church*, says that Divine Man, *but DIOTREPHES, Who loveth to have the Preeminence among Them, receiveth Us not**. DIOTREPHES was a Christian, and probably a Christian Priest too, and thought Himself considerable enough to form a Sect, and to head a Party in the Church, even against St. JOHN. He loved to have the Preeminence: Ambition, it seems, was his Motive: And as He wanted not slight, or cunning Craftiness, whereby He could impose upon the Weak and Ignorant, and mis-lead Them with every Wind of Doctrine; He was able, in a good Measure, to maintain his Ground, and to keep Himself in Countenance, tho' in direct Opposition to the greatest Man in the Church, the only then surviving Apostle. Having seen how Pride and Ambition prompt and incite Many to become Deceivers, or false Teachers.

2. Next let Us observe how Avarice, or Love of Profit, may sometimes do the same Thing. There is a Gain to be made, in some Junctures, by perverting the Truth, and deceiving the Populace. Men who are not worthy to teach in the Church, or who have been set aside for their Insufficiency or Immorality, may bring up new Doctrines, and draw Disciples after Them, for the Sake of Protection and Maintenance, or for filthy Lucre. With Such, the vending of false Doctrine is a Trade, and Preaching a Merchandize. They must of Course contrive to teach what will be most for their Interest,

* 3 John i. 9.

not so much considering what is *true* and *right*, as what is most *palatable* and *pleasing*, and will bring Them in most *Profit*. Men of this Stamp are the *meanest* and *vilest* of Men: Yet Such there were even in the *Apostolical Times*: For St. PAUL thus complains, in his Epistle to TITUS; *There are Many unruly and vain Talkers and Deceivers, especially They of the Circumcision: whose Mouths must be stopped, Who pervert whole Houses, teaching Things which They ought not, for filthy Lucre's Sake* *. They invented and propagated palatable Doctrines, pleasing Errors, such as took with the *Vicious*, and brought in Gain to the Teachers. Those *false Teachers* were *Jewish Christians*, and taught, among other Things, that *Israelites*, All in general, were *secure of their Portion* in the *Life to come*; a Doctrine as *pleasing* to Many, as it was *pernicious* to Their Souls. Another Doctrine which They taught, as false as the other, was the *Necessity of Circumcision to Gentiles*; and This They did, only to *humour* and *flatter* the *Jews*, for Their own Interest, lest They should suffer Persecution of the *Jews*, for the Cross of CHRIST †. Of like Sort were the *Nicolaitans*, or *Balaamites*, Whom St. PETER, St. JUDE, and St. JOHN speak of, as *running greedily after the Error of BALAAM for Reward* ‡. They taught several Doctrines, *false* and *scandalous*, but agreeable enough to *Flesh and Blood*; and such as, upon that Account, brought Them in both *Honour* and *Profit*, among the *Libertines* of the Age, among the *Dissolute* and *Profane*. Thus has *Avarice* been the *Mother of Heresies*, and has brought in many *Deceivers* into the Church of CHRIST: But They have contrived generally to give some *plausible Turn* and *Colour* to Their *Inventions*, through Their *Sleight*, and *cunning Craftiness*, in Order to deceive the Hearts of the *Simple*, and to beguile *unwary* and *unstable Souls*.

3. One Motive more I mentioned, namely, *Voluptuousness*, or *Love of Pleasure*. As religious *Restraints* set not easy upon *Flesh and Blood*, but bear hard upon *corrupt Nature*; so Men of *corrupt Minds* will be ever labouring to *invent*, and *publish* *smooth* and *softening Doctrines*, such as may either *qualify* the *Strictness* of the Gospel-Rule, or *sap* the *Belief* of a future *Reckoning*. Many ancient HERETICKS had such Views as these in the first broaching of their Heresies: But I shall look no lower than the *Scripture Accounts*; that it may appear from thence, that neither any *Respect* even to living *Apostles*, nor any *Regard* to the *Attestations* of the brightest *Miracles*,

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* Tit. i. 10, 11.

† Jude. ii. 2 Pet. ii. 15. Rev. ii. 14.

‡ Galat. vi. 12.

can sufficiently deter Those who are disposed to set up for *Heads of a Sect*, and to disperse and propagate their own *crude Conceptions*. HYMENEUS, and PHILETUS, and ALEXANDER the *Copper-Smith*, were Men of this perverse Stamp; and gave great Disturbance to the Holy Apostle ST. PAUL *. They pretended that the *Resurrection* was already past, *overthrowing the Faith of Some* †. They explained away the *Scripture-Doctrine* of a real *Resurrection* to quite another Sense, and gave out Their own *false Glosses* for *Scripture Truths*, as is the Manner of *Deceivers*. Their *Design* was, to take off the *Awe and Dread* of a *future Judgment*, and thereby to open a Door to all *Licentiousness of Life*, and *Dissoluteness of Manners*. ST. PAUL therefore reprimanded Them sharply, as became his high Office; and, by his Apostolical Authority, He *delivered Them over unto Satan*, that They might take Warning for the future, and *learn to blaspheme* ‡. These Instances are sufficient to shew how *Deceivers* arise, and with *what Views* They endeavour to *make Converts* to their respective *Persuasions*, all centring in the *Love of Honour*, or *Riches*, or *Pleasure*; or more briefly, in the *Love of the World*: For, when Men desert either the *true Faith*, or *sound Morals*, We may say of Them, as ST. PAUL said of DEMAS;—*DEMAS hath forsaken Me, having loved this present World* §. But having done with the *Deceivers*, I come now secondly,

II.

To consider the Case of the *Deceived*, Who suffer Themselves to be *tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine*.

They are supposed to be *ignorantly*, and in a Manner *blindly*, led on by Others; Otherwise, They would be rather *Confederates* and *Confidants* in *managing the Deceit*, and so would be more *Deceivers* than *Deceived*. Now, as to Those who are so *ignorantly* imposed upon, They are *more or less to blame*, according as Their *Ignorance* is *more or less blameable*: And That again will be *more or less blameable*, according as it is *more or less affected*, or *wilful*.

There are, I think, *three Cases* which will take in All Sorts of Men who suffer Themselves to be *deceived* in Things of this Kind.

The first is, Of Those who have *no Opportunity*, *no moral Possibility* of *informing Themselves better*. The second is, Of Those who *might* inform Themselves better, but *do not*. The third, Of Those who *might* also be better informed, but *will not*. Of which in their Order.

I. A

* 1 Tim. i. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 17.
—iv. 14.

† 2 Tim. ii. 18.
§ 2 Tim. iv. 10.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 20.

1. As to the *first Sort*, since They are supposed to lie under *invincible Ignorance* and *Incapacity*, Their Case is pitiable. Perhaps it may be the Case of a poor *Servant* under an *overbearing Master*, Whom He is taught to reverence in all Things, and to take his Word for a Law. Or it may be the Case of a *raw* and *ignorant Youth* while under a *bad Father*: Or of any plain *labouring Man* in the Way of *low Life*, Who can neither read nor examine for Himself, but must take every Thing upon *Trust* from the Hand of such *superior Person*, or Persons as He chances to be listed under. These, and the like Cases, I refer to *simple, unaffected Ignorance*: And so far as Their *Ignorance*, or *Infirmity* is really *unconquerable*; so far are They *blameless*, or *not accountable*. If They be like *Children* tossed to and fro with every *Wind of Doctrine*; yet, if They are really *Children* in *Understanding*, and are *overborn* by Others in such a Way as is *morally irresistible*, considering Their *Circumstances*; then it seems to be Their *Misfortune* to be so imposed upon, rather than Their *Fault*, and so is *not imputable*.

2. A *second Case* is, of Those who may inform Themselves better, but *neglect* to do it. I suppose it to be merely *Neglect* in Them, not *Design*. Perhaps They have little or no *Leisure* for Enquiries: They are taken up with worldly Cares and Business: They have a very great Esteem and Value for the Man who so *misleads* Them, and They know no better, but swallow every Thing He says, without considering; or They are not aware of any *ill Consequences* of the Doctrine, see or suspect *no Harm* in it. This, I think, is a true Description of the *Unthinking* and *Careless*, who take up their Opinions by *Chance*, and enquire no farther. They are much to *blame* in this Affair; because God has given Them the Faculty of *Reason*, which ought not to be thus left to lie *dormant* and *useless*. Men who can be sharp enough in *secular Affairs* to prevent being imposed upon, may and ought to have some Guard upon Themselves with respect also to their *spiritual Concernments*. It is not enough to say, They have *Something else* to mind, or that They do not think of it: Such *Negligence* betrays a *Culpable Carelessness* as to the *one Thing needful*, and a great *Contempt* of God and Religion. We ought to think it as much our Concern in *spiritual Things*, not to have *Errors*, and *false Doctrines* put upon Us; as We do in *Things temporal*, not to be imposed upon by *false Weights* instead of *true*, or *false Money* instead of *Sterling*. So much for Those Who are merely *careless* in a Matter of this high Concernment.

3. There is a yet a *third Sort* of Men, worse than the former, who suffer Themselves to be *deceived*, and *might* know better, but *will not*: That is to say, Their *Ignorance* is *af-*

facted and wilful: They love Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil. These are Such as readily run in with every Wind of Doctrine which hits their Taste, and chimes in with their favourite Inclinations. They admit the Doctrine, because They like it; and They easily believe it true, because They would have it so. It is with this Kind of Men that Deceivers prevail most, and make Their Harvest. False Teachers commonly observe and study the several Weaknesses and corrupt Dispositions of Those whom They apply to; and so, by flattering their Passions, and humouring Their Follies, They lead Them about where They please, and make a Property of Them. The Persons so deceived, first deceive Themselves, being led away and enticed as much by their own Lusts, as by the Tempter's Subtilty. They are very near as deep in Guilt, as the Deceivers Themselves are, because the same corrupt Principles are common to Both; only there is this Difference, that One spreads the false Doctrine, the Other gladly receives it, and by receiving encourages it, and so is passively instrumental in seducing Others, and is but one Remove from the more active Seducer. Having thus considered the several Cases both of Deceivers and Deceived, it remains now only, in the third and last Place,

III.

To subjoin some Advices proper to prevent our falling in with Either.

The best Preservative, in this Case, is an honest and good Heart, well disposed towards Truth and Godliness, having no By-Ends to serve, no favourite Lust or Passion to indulge. If Any Man is but willing to know and do God's Commandments; He will easily discern, in most Cases, whether a Doctrine be of God, or whether it be of Men. The Evidences of the true Religion, and of its main Doctrines, are so bright and strong, when carefully attended to, that common Sense and Reason are sufficient to lead us, when there is no Bias to mislead Us. If We intend well, and sincerely aim at Truth, and have no Inclination to turn from it, either to the right or left, We shall not miss of it; at least, not in any Points of Weight or Concernment. Retain but this honest, and upright Disposition of Heart, and then, as You can have no Inclination to deceive Others, so neither will you be liable to be grossly, or dangerously deceived your Selves. Many particular Cautions might be given, which I have no Room to mention: But He who has once well learnt the general Rule before mentioned, will need no other, or will Himself find out, as Occasion offers, all the rest.

And

And now to apply very briefly What hath been here said, to our particular Case and Circumstances.—We live in an Age of Deceivers, and so did the Apostles Themselves: And if Their Authority, even among Their own Disciples, was not sufficient to keep out false Doctrines and dangerous; so neither will any more disputable Authority be able to do it now. It is our Happiness however, that both the Truth, and the whole Truth, purged from every gross Error or Superstition, is here publicly professed and taught, and every One that runs may read it. What has been calmly, wisely, and deliberately settled by excellent Men, Martyrs here, and now Saints with God, let None lightly depart from, lest They justly fall under the Censure of the Text, of being like Children tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Such Deceivers We are to expect, and Such We have had lately, more perhaps than ever.

For several Years last past, rude and bold Attacks have been making against the important Doctrines of Christianity, and against all Revealed Religion: And This is what They are still carrying on with exquisite Subtilty and Craftiness many Ways, and with a great deal of fruitless Pains and Labour. For, I may have leave to suppose, that No Man can in this Case be deceived, who has not first a Desire to be so, and is not the Dupe and Bubble to his own Lusts and Vices. Attempts have been made to persuade Us, that private Vices are publick Benefits: Who sees not that Their Lusts dictate what Their Pens write, and that the very Corruption of the Heart is come up into the Head? Others presume to tell Us, that Man is no Free Agent, and has no Liberty of Will; from whence it would immediately follow, that there is no Virtue nor Vice, no future Reckoning. Such Dogmatizers as These, only betray Their own guilty Fears, and, if there be any such Thing, have prejudged Themselves beforehand to everlasting Damnation. Others, lastly, have run riot upon the Miracles of our Blessed Lord, and have thrown out more Blasphemies in a few Months Time, than hath ever been known in any Christian Country, in a Course of Ages. Can any serious Person be deceived by these Things, which are frightful and hideous enough, almost to chill his Blood, or to make it run backward in his Veins?

It would be affronting a Christian Audience, to exhort Them not to be carried about with any such Wind of Doctrines as have been taught by these Blasphemers. The cunning Serpent, in these Instances, seems to have gone beyond Himself, and to

have forgot his *wented Subtilty*. The Imposition is *too gross*, and the Language too coarse to fetch in *Converts*. All it can do, is, to make *Those worse* who were *always bad*, to render Them perhaps ten times more the Children of Hell, than They were before.

As to Men of any good Sense or Sobriety, I presume, such Attempts will only fill Them with Horror and Astonishment, and stir up Their *pious Zeal* for God and Religion. May all Attacks upon our most Holy Faith, or against any Branch of it, have no other Effect: And may our Blessed Lord God, who alone can bring Good out of Evil, direct and over-rule all Things for the Good of his Church, thro' JESUS CHRIST our Lord. Amen.



SERMON



S E R M O N XI.

The Case of St. PAUL, in *persecuting* the Church.

ACTS IX. 4, 5.

And He fell to the Earth, and heard a Voice, saying unto Him; Saul, Saul, why persecutest Thou Me? And He said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom Thou persecutest. It is hard for Thee to kick against the Pricks.

THE Festival of St. PAUL's *Conversion* is of great Note, and of long Standing in the Church, not much short of a Thousand Years. The Memorial of that happy, miraculous Conversion, may suggest to Us many pious and useful Reflections; for which Reason I chuse, conformably to our *Church-Offices*, to entertain You, this Day, upon That Subject. SAUL was once a grievous *Persecutor* of the Church of God: But, by the Divine Blessing, He at length changed his Principles, changing also his *Jewish* Name SAUL into the *Roman* PAUL, and became a *Chief Apostle*. None of the *Apostles* had so considerable a Hand in converting Men to the Christian Faith, as this St. PAUL had, He laboured more abundantly than They All. He had for his Province the whole *Gentile World*, being therefore called the *Apostle of the Gentiles*. And as his Sermons, while living, drew many Thousands, or even Thousands of Thousands after Him, to profess the Faith of CHRIST; so the Writings which He left behind Him, making up a great Part of the *Canon of the New Testament*, have been of admirable Use to feed and support the *Christian Church* ever since. Of this Great Man, and Blessed Saint, I am now going to treat. The History of his Conversion is particularly related in this

Chapter by St. LUKE, and by St. PAUL Himself once and again in Chapters the xxiii^d and xxviiith of this Book of the *Acts*. Such particular Care has been taken by Divine Providence, that an Event so memorable should be transmitted down to Posterity with Marks of Honour and Advantage.

It was about two Years after our Lord was gone to Heaven, that this so famed Conversion was wrought. SAUL, for a Year or two before, had behaved as blind Zealots are used to do, with great Warmth and Fury. He was then in the Heat of his Youth, about 30 Years old, very honest and sincere in his Way, and exceedingly zealous for the Law of his God. As He had been bred up a Jew, and of the *strictest Sect* among Them, a *Hebrew of the Hebrews* by *Descent*, and by *Party* a *Pharisee*; He thought it became Him to maintain the Religion of his Country, and the Faith of his Ancestors, with all imaginable Vigour against All Opposers. The *Prejudices of Education* were so strong, and his *natural Temper* withal so *eager and impetuous*, that He staid not to *examine* into the Merits of the *Christian Cause*, into the *Truth or Credibility* of the then new, and just *commencing Religion*: But as He very well knew that his *own Religion* was from God, He too hastily concluded that This other, now pretending to rival it, could not be divine also. Under this *false Persuasion*, He laboured to *destroy* it, believing it his *Duty* so to do, and that the *Honour of God* required it at his Hands. Fired with the Thought, He entered a Kind of Volunteer into the Service, went of his own accord to the *Magistrates* to take out his *Warrants* for *persecuting* the poor *Christians*. He had *Commission* given Him to break open their Houses, to seize and apprehend Christian Men or Women, and to hale them by Force to Prison, in Order to have still greater Severities exercised upon Them. While He was thus driving on with unbridled Zeal, He distressed the *Christians* all about *Jerusalem*, and pursued them even to *strange Cities*. One of those *strange Cities*, about 160 Miles from *Jerusalem*, was *Damascus*; and thither was He marching with all Haste, to search for *Christians*, that He might bring Them away bound in Chains, to be tried and executed at *Jerusalem*: But while He was yet upon the Road near to *Damascus*, it pleased the Blessed JESUS to look mercifully down from Heaven, and to take Pity both upon the *Church* and *Him*. He calls to Him, through a Gleam of Light, brighter than the Sun at Mid-day; SAUL, SAUL, *why persecutest Thou Me?* To which, SAUL, trembling and pale, replied, *Who art Thou Lord?* The Voice again

again answered, *I am JESUS whom Thou persecutest; it is hard for Thee to kick against the Pricks.* Hard for Thee to contend with *Me thy Maker and Governor*, who can crush Thee at Pleasure. All Thy Attempts against *Me* are like kicking against the Spikes: They will not hurt *Me*, but they will prove fatal to *Thee*, if persisted in. SAUL, after this so friendly and heavenly Warning, instantly submitted; and from that Time forwards put off the *Persecutor*, to become a *Convert*, and an *Apostle* of CHRIST. This is a short Account of the Fact, which the Text relates to: And now I proceed to make the proper Reflections, and Observations upon it.

I. Consider We SAUL as a *Persecutor*, and the *Guilt* He contracted in *being such*.

II. Consider We the *Alleviation* of his *Guilt*, on the *Account* whereof He found *Mercy*.

III. Observe We the exceeding great Goodness of our Blessed Lord, both to Him and to the Church, in this *Affair*.

IV. Consider We the proper Use, or Application to be made of the Whole.

I.

Consider We SAUL as a *Persecutor*, and the *Guilt* He contracted in *being such*.

However *honest* and *sincere* He had been in doing it, however *fully persuaded* in his own Mind that He was *serving God* in it, yet He never reflected upon it afterwards but with *Shame* and *Regret*, with a *penitential Sorrow* and *Remorse* for it. *I verily thought with my self*, says He in one Place, *that I ought to do many Things contrary to the Name of JESUS of Nazareth**. He did it, it seems, in a *full Persuasion*, with an *upright Conscience*, and in the *Integrity of his Heart*: Notwithstanding which, He elsewhere ranks Himself among *Sinners*, on that very Account.

By our Translation it should seem He was *Chief* of Sinners; because it is there said, *Of whom I am Chief†*: But I conceive, ὡς πρῶτος εἰμι *Eyw* should rather be rendred, *of whom I am first*, meaning not that He was either the *Chief*, or the *First* of Sinners, *absolutely*, but the *First* or *Chief* of *these*

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* Acts xxvi. 9.

† 1 Tim. i. 15.

those Sinners whom CHRIST, in a remarkable Manner, had shewn Mercy to; as it follows in the next Verse: *Howbeit, for this Cause I obtained Mercy, ἵνα ἐν ἐμοὶ ὁπώρα, that in Me First JESUS CHRIST might shew forth all Long-Suffering, &c.*

But to proceed. In another Place, humbling Himself for his Sin in this Particular, He says, *I am the Least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God**. He takes Shame to Himself, and confesses his Guiltiness, in that He had persecuted the Church of God. For, tho' He had Commission from the Magistrates, and might perhaps have been justified in prosecuting Those who should disturb the Peace for the Sake of an Imposture, or for any false Religion; yet, no Commission could justify, or wholly excuse any Man in persecuting the Truth, in persecuting the Church of God. No Concerns of temporal Peace are of any Moment in such a Case: But both They who commission, and They who act under it, are alike guilty, in opposing the Will of Heaven, in fighting against God. No Persuasion of Mind, no Sincerity of Heart can altogether justify in such Cases; because God never does send out any Religion, but He gives also sufficient Credentials with it; which, if calmly considered, and carefully attended to, in such a Manner as All Men ought to do in a Matter of that High Concernment, will be found to be abundantly full and satisfactory. SAUL was too eager and hasty, to consider well the Case. Prepossession had blinded Him, and He suffered his Passions to run before his Reason. He took it too easily for granted, that Truth was on his Side, without so much as allowing the other Side a fair Hearing. This was wrong Judgment, and a very great Fault in a Person of his good Sense and great Abilities of Mind. It was the greater, because it was a Cause of Blood, and the Lives of many Thousands might be concern'd in it. It is exceeding sinful and dangerous to mistake in such a Case: For, if the supposed Offence of Those Whom He so persecutes be not proved, and the Crime clear, it is murdering Men, instead of doing Justice. St. PAUL, afterwards, did not forget to make Mention of this High Aggravation of his Fault: For thus He speaks: *When the Blood of thy Martyr STEPHEN was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his Death, and kept the Raiment of Them that slew Him†*. It is very true, that, by the Jewish Law, Blasphemers and False Prophets, and Such as attempted to seduce the People from the true Religion, were to be put to Death;

* 1 Cor. xv. 9.

† Acts xxiii. 10.

Death: And accordingly the Prophet ELIJAH, and King JEHU, made no Scruple of shedding the Blood of the *Priests* and *Worshippers* of BAAL, as was proper and necessary to do: But then those *Priests*, and those *Worshippers* were really *Impostors*, *Seducers*, and *gross Idolaters*, and deserved to suffer. The *Christians* were quite contrary: Their *Cause* was just, their *Religion* true, their *Commission* divine; which the Persecutors Themselves might easily have perceived, had They but *duly attended* either to the *Nature of the Doctrine*, or to the *Miracles wrought* in Confirmation of it, or to Their own *Prophecies*, which long before had made way for it, and given Testimony to it.

Upon the Whole then, SAUL, considered as a *Persecutor of the Church of God*, cannot be acquitted of *Prejudice*, *Partiality*, and *precipitate Judgment*, in a Cause which demanded *cool Deliberation*, and the most scrupulous *Care*, *Caution*, and *Sedateness*. Proceed We next,

II.

To consider What may be pleaded to *soften* and *alleviate* his Guilt in it, on *Account of which He found Mercy*.

He Himself has intimated how the Case stood with Him; observing, that, tho' He had been some time a *Blasphemer*, and a *Persecutor*, and *Injurious*; yet He *obtained Mercy*, because He *did it ignorantly in Unbelief**. He *did not know* that the *Christian Religion* was from God, and that the *Jewish* was to cease and *give way to it*. He had no Suspicion, no Thought of any such Thing: He *meant* and *intended well*, while He was *doing amiss*: This is his *Excuse*.

It may be said in Answer, that He *might* have known better, if He had been pleased to *examine*—Very true, He *might*; and therefore He is *blameable*: But still his *Heart* was *honest* and good, and therefore his *Mistake* was *pitiable*, and *pardonable*. His *Ignorance* was not altogether *affected* and *wilful*, but had a great Mixture of *natural Temper* and *Human Frailty*, to *alleviate* and *qualify* it. The Jews who crucified our Saviour, did it *thro' Ignorance*†: And therefore our Blessed Lord, praying for Them upon the Cross, says, *Father forgive Them, for They know not what They do*‡. And yet it must be observed, that Their *Ignorance* was much more *affected* and *culpable*, than St. PAUL's was; as proceeding from a much more *corrupt Heart*. Envy, Pride, Malice, and other *vile Affections* had blinded Their Eyes, and corrupted Their Understandings; Whereas St. PAUL's Ignorance seems to have

* 1 Tim. i. 13.

† Acts iii. 17.

‡ Luke xxiii. 34.

have been owing chiefly, or solely, to the almost insuperable Prejudices of Education, and the natural Warmth and Vivacity of his Spirit. He had Zeal without Knowledge, more Heat than Light: But it was a Zeal for God, and not for any of the Honours, or Riches, or Pleasures of this World. His Mistakes proceeded from no evil Principle, no sinister Aims, or corrupt Vices; but from an over eager Desire of promoting, as He believed, the Honour and Glory of God, in the Way which He had been bred up to, and which He had never yet presumed to call in Question. He had lived in all good Conscience before God*; a strict Observer of the Jewish Law, and true to his Profession and Principles: But a new Case, a new Turn of Religion came which He had not suspected, and which He was too hasty to allow Himself Time to consider. All This was consistent with a very honest and good Mind, sincerely zealous for the Honour of God, but misguided by an erroneous Conscience. Our Blessed Lord, well knowing the Integrity of his Heart, was pleased to overlook his Failings, and to receive Him into his own more immediate Service. He approved his upright Zeal, which wanted Nothing but clearer Light, and a better Direction. He indulges Him the Favour of a heavenly Vision, condescends to speak to Him from above, and finds Him as willing and ready, upon Correction, to embrace and propagate the Christian Religion, as He had before been to persecute and destroy it. Which brings me to consider in the third Place,

III.

The exceeding great Goodness of our Blessed Lord, both to St. PAUL and to the Church, in this Affair.

How kind, and how gracious were the Words which our Lord spake: SAUL, SAUL, why persecutest Thou Me? intimating the Love and Tenderness He had for all his true Followers; insomuch that He looked upon any Injuries committed against Them, to be as so many Injuries done to Himself. Next, He gave the good Man a seasonable, and a very affecting Caution. I am JESUS, whom Thou persecutest: I am JESUS, the Saviour of the World (so the Name signifies) it is hard for Thee to contend with One so much mightier than Thou art: Stop thy Career, and retreat in Time. These were moving Arguments, and pierced to the very Soul. But to make the Impression still stronger, He was pleased to surround Him with dazzling Light, and to strike Him quite blind for a Time. He had the better Opportunity of retiring inwards, to consider the more closely, and to recollect. These outward Means, together

ther with *inward Grace*, had their full Effect, and made SAUL become a very obedient and humble *Convert* to the *Faith of CHRIST*. Thus the Man was marvellously rescued from the Jaws of Death and Hell, in order to become a great and glorious Saint in Heaven. Such was our Lord's Kindness to Him in particular.

But, What is still more considerable, was the exceeding Goodness therein shewn to the *Church* in general. It was not only taking off a very furious and dangerous *Enemy*; but it was making of Him One of the kindest and best of *Friends*. There was No Man *better qualified* to serve the *Church*, both by preaching and writing, than St. PAUL. He had great *natural Abilities*, improved by a *liberal and polite Education*; to which also were super-added many extraordinary *supernatural Gifts*: And one Advantage more He had above the *Rest* of the *Apostles*; that He could tell both *Jews and Pagans*, whom He went to convert, that He had been once as *vehemently prejudiced* against *Christianity*, as They could be; that He had been mad enough even to *persecute* it; that He knew the utmost They could have to *object* to it, for He had been one of the *Objectors* Himself, and upon as good Reasons as Any Man else could be: And yet, after all, He had met with *full Conviction* of the Folly of his former Course, and of the necessary Obligation which Every Man lay under, to submit their *Prejudices* to the *Law of CHRIST*. When Any leading, or considerable Man of a Sect *changes Sides*, and there is no visible *Interest*, no *worldly Prospects* which could invite Him to it, His Example carries very considerable Force and Weight with it. It is reasonably presumed in such a Case, that Nothing less than *Demonstration*, or some *Divine Impulse*, could work *Conviction* upon a Person so *strongly prepossessed*, and *prejudiced* another Way. On this Account St. PAUL's preaching up *CHRIST* among *Jews and Gentiles*, was more affecting and forcible than That of St. PETER, or St. JOHN, or Any Other of the *Apostles*. They had been Friends to *CHRIST's Religion* from the *Beginning*, and might perhaps be suspected of some *partial Fondness* towards it: But PAUL had been a *professed Adversary* to it, and *very bitter* against it; so that Nothing but a strong Conviction of its *Truth and Certainty* could have made Him espouse it. It is from this very Man, once an avowed and declared *Enemy* to *Christianity*, that We have, at this Day, fourteen *Epistles* written in *Defence and Confirmation* of it. He was the *Chosen Vessel*, the principal Instrument which God made Use of, for converting and reforming the World; because He, of All Men, having been *once an Enemy*, and
now

now become a Friend, was the most likely to persuade. What Advantage that single Circumstance gave St. PAUL in his Preaching, may be learned from What is said in the 21st verse of the ixth Chapter of the Acts. *All that heard Him, were amazed and said; Is not This He that destroyed Them which called on This Name in Jerusalem, &c.* And St. PAUL Himself takes notice of it, in these Words; *They had heard that He which persecuted us in Times past, now preacheth the Faith, which once He destroyed, and They glorified God in Me*.*

IV.

It remains now only to consider the proper Use, and Application to be made of the Whole.

1. And first, let Us learn from the Instance of St. PAUL, how much it concerns Every Man to take Care, that He judges right in all Matters of high Consequence especially, and that his Conscience be duly informed. Let No Man trust to a *meer Persuasion* of Mind, which may be owing only to *Prepossession* and *Prejudice*; but let Him well and wisely examine upon what Foundation his present Judgment is grounded. Infinite Mischiefs may arise from an *erroneous Conscience*, and a *misguided Zeal*. It is not sufficient to mean and intend well, in such Cases: But it is further necessary to take all reasonable Care to be *rightly and fully informed*; that so We may know certainly what we do, and may be able to justify it upon true and sound Principles. Ignorance of the Rule will not excuse a Man in acting against it; because He ought to know the Rule He is to act by; which He may do, if He will be at the Pains to attend and look into it. Yet it must be acknowledged, on the other Hand, that many merciful Allowances will be made for Men of sincere Virtue and Probity, Who have been misled only by the almost insuperable Prejudices of Education, and whose Mistakes have been owing more to Natural Infirmary and Human Frailty, than to any evil Disposition of a corrupt Heart. St. PAUL found Mercy, on this Account chiefly: And so may Other misguided Zealots who have the same Probity of Mind which St. PAUL, even before his Conversion, had.

2. From the same Instance of St. PAUL, learn We a ready Submission and Obedience to Truth and Godliness, when sufficiently propounded to us. Lay We aside all inveterate Prejudices, and stubborn Reluctances, as soon as ever We have Light enough to see that We have been in an Error, and that We ought to retract. There is a great Deal of Pride and Obstinacy in some Tempers, which renders Them proof

against

* Gal. i. 23, 24.

against Conviction. They are averse to *own* They have ever been in the *wrong*, lest it be a Reflection upon Their Judgment, and lessen Their Esteem in the World. This is Folly and Vanity. There is no *real Discredit*, but *Honour* rather, in *growing wiser*: And it is much more creditable to *correct* our Follies or Mistakes, than to *persist* in them. How resigned and tractable was the good APOSTLE of this Day! how ready both to *own*, and to *retract* his former Errors and *Misconduct*! how *sincerely penitent* for them, and zealous to *amend* them! He valued not the Imputation of *Lewity* or *Inconstancy*: To *change for the better*, shewed the truest *Constancy* of a well-disposed Mind. He regarded not the Flouts or Reproaches of his *Party*, Whom He had deserted for CHRIST. Let Them call Him a Deserter, a Renegade, an Apostate, or What They pleased: He knew that He had weighty and *unanswerable Reasons* for leaving Them, and that *They* ought also to follow, under Pain and Peril of being Themselves deserted and abandoned by God. Such was St. PAUL's wise and willing Compliance with what was right and just, as soon as apprized of it; which shewed a *large Soul*, and a *generous Probity* of Mind, and is an admirable Pattern for Others to copy after.

3. Thirdly, and lastly, *Learn We* from the whole Transaction, which We this Day commemorate, the *Truth and Certainty* of our Lord's *Resurrection* and *Ascension* into Heaven, his Power and Majesty there as Lord of all, and his exceeding Goodness in looking down from thence to take Care of his Church here below; and how dangerous a Thing it will be, and how fatal to the Undertakers, to persist in any Attempts against Him. It will be *hard for Them to kick against the Pricks*. What Account then shall Those Men have to give, who still *oppose*, and, as much as in Them lies, *persecute* the Religion of CHRIST? I speak not now of *Jews, Pagans, or Mahometans*, Who may have the *Prejudices of Education* to plead, as St. PAUL had, to *alleviate* Their Sin in doing it: But I speak of *Such* as have been *baptized* and *bred up* in this *very Religion*, and have *revolted* from it, and *laboured*, if it were possible, to *destroy* it. Their Conduct is plainly *monstrous*, and Their Crime *unpardonable*. They have *no Colour* for it, *no Temptation* to it, more than what springs from a wicked and *corrupt Heart*. Either the Pride of Singularity, or the Spirit of Contradiction, or Malice towards the Profession of this Religion, or the Aversion they have to Rule and Restraint, or, in a Word, Their *strong Attachment* to Their *Lusts and Vices*, makes Them wild and outrageous, and so of Course

Course drives Them upon any desperate Lengths. The Time will come, when the Lord JESUS, *Whom They persecute*, will take sad Vengeance upon Them in Flames of Fire. In the mean while, let Every serious Christian detest and abominate such flagrant Instances of Impiety: And let Us however make this good Use of Them, as they are Occasions offered, to stir Us up and to awaken Us to a more fervent Zeal for our most Holy Profession, endeavouring also to adorn the Same with a *Conversation* suitable to the Gospel of CHRIST.

EXXV
EXXVI
EXXVII

SERMON



S E R M O N XII.

CHRIST'S *Sacrifice of Himself* explained; and
Man's Duty to offer spiritual Sacrifice inferred,
and recommended.

EPHES. V. 1, 2.

Be Ye therefore Followers of God, as dear Children; and walk in Love, as CHRIST also hath loved Us, and hath given Himself for Us, an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling Savour.

THESE Words carry in them an instructive Lesson concerning CHRIST'S *Death and Passion*, together with a *practical Conclusion* drawn from it, to shew the Use and Improvement which We ought to make of it. As CHRIST hath loved Us, and gave *Himself a Sacrifice* to God upon the Cross for Us (a sure Pledge and Token of his Kindness towards Us) so ought *We to give up our selves* to God in all *holy Obedience*, but more particularly in the Offices of *Love* towards our *Brethren*, as such Offices are the most acceptable Sacrifices that We can offer to God most High. The *general Meaning* and Intendment of the Text being thus briefly opened, I may now proceed to a *particular Consideration* of the two main *Branches* of it; namely, our *Lord's unexampled Sacrifice* made in his *Death*, for the Honour of God and the Good of Men; and *Our own Sacrifice of Our Selves* in the whole Course of our Lives, which ought to bear some *Analogy* to our Lord's, and to be, as it were, a Copy drawn from it, as an humble Imitation of it,

I.

I begin with *our Lord's Sacrifice*, That Great Sacrifice which was from all Eternity forelaid in the High Counsels of Heaven; which was intimated to Mankind as soon as there

there was Need for it (that is, immediately after the *Fall*) which, probably, gave Birth and Rise to *all Other Sacrifices* whatsoever, whether in the *Jewish* or *Gentile* World; but which undoubtedly was as the Pattern in the Mount to all the Sacrifices of the Old Testament (*Mosaical*, or *Patriarchal*) all which pointed to it, rested upon it, and centred in it. No sooner had Man forfeited the Favour of God by committing Sin, but there appeared a Necessity of a *Sacrifice for Sin*, to re-instate Him. Divine Wisdom appointed it, and called for it: From whence We may certainly infer, that Reasons of Justice, or (which comes to the same) the unerring Rules of Divine Government required it. God would not, or in Reason could not, be appeased without it: But with it He might, and He has declared that He would. He accepts of our *Lord's Sacrifice* as a grateful Odour, a *sweet-smelling Savour* delightful to Him, as *reconciling* his *Justice* and *Goodness* together, securing the Honour of his *Laws*; and at the same time providing for the Felicity of Man.

The first Time We meet with the Phrase of *sweet-smelling Savour*, or *sweet Savour* (which comes to the same) is in the VIIIth Chapter of *Genesis*, v. 21, where NOAH having offered Burnt-offerings, the Lord is said to have *smelled a sweet Savour*, or a *Savour of Rest*. When God speaks to Men, He accommodates his Expressions to the *Language* of Men, in Order to be understood by Them. He condescends to make Use of Their low Phrases, to express high and sublime Truths in the most affecting and sensible Way. The Figure, or Similitude here made use of, is very easily understood: For, as Perfumes are grateful to Man's Sense, so are virtuous and godly Acts or Exercises grateful to the Divine Mind. Our Lord's Obedience unto Death, even the Death of the Cross, was eminently a godly Service, the most exalted Instance of true *Piety* and *Charity* that ever was, or ever could be performed. It was more than All Men, or All Angels, more than the whole Creation in a Body together could have done towards the pacifying of God, and reconciling of Man; and therefore it was as the *richest Perfume*, having a most *delightful Fragrancy*, such as None other can come up to, inasmuch as that therein God is well pleased.

To make This appear the more distinctly, We may consider, *First*, the PRIEST: *Secondly*, the SACRIFICE: *Thirdly*, the ALTAR: And *lastly*, the Divine LAW-GIVER to Whom the *Offering* was made, and by Whom It was, and is accepted.

1. A PRIEST, properly speaking, is a Person taken from among Men, authorized by God to be an Advocate for them at the Court of Heaven.* As a Prophet or an Apostle properly is an Ambassador from God to treat with Men; so a Priest is an Agent or Solicitor, in behalf of Men, to treat with God. Our Lord was both a Prophet and Priest, in different Views: But here We are to consider Him in his *Sacerdotal* Capacity only; in which Capacity He made his Offering and Sacrifice for Sins. He is a Priest of an Higher Order than the Order of AARON, the Order of MELCHIZEDECK, whose Priesthood was Royal: For he was King of SALEM, which, in mystical Construction, is King of Peace. MELCHIZEDECK, undoubtedly was a mortal Man; yet, to make Him the fitter Type of CHRIST, He is introduced as a Priest, and no Notice taken either of his Birth or his Decease; as if, like CHRIST, He had no Beginning of Days, nor were to have End of Life. He was introduced as Blessing ABRAHAM, the Father of the Faithful, to intimate that CHRIST's Priesthood was to extend to All the Faithful, in all past, present, and future Ages; and not to be confined, like AARON's to the Jews only, commencing with their Economy, expiring with it. And it is farther observable, that MELCHIZEDECK, as introduced in Genesis, brought no Typical Offerings or Sacrifices, as AARON was wont to do: He presented Nothing to God but Himself, and his pious and benevolent Offices; in which He was so far a Type of CHRIST (though very imperfectly) as CHRIST also offered Himself and his all-sufficient Services, active and passive, unto God. MELCHIZEDECK further exercised his High Priesthood, in Blessing the Father of the Faithful, and feeding Him with Bread and Wine; correspondently to Which, Our Lord, as High Priest, Blesses all the Faithful with all spiritual Blessings†, and feeds Them with the Bread of Heaven, the Wine of Angels, with his own Body and Blood.—But my Business at present is, not with the Blessings consequent upon our Lord's Sacrifice, but with the Sacrifice it self of which the Text speaks.

2. The Text mentions both OFFERING, and SACRIFICE: Our Lord was Both. He hath given Himself for Us an Offering, and a Sacrifice. The Word Offering is of somewhat larger Meaning than the Word Sacrifice: For, every Sacrifice is an Offering to God, but every Offering to God is not a Sacrifice. However, the Word Offering, in this Place, does not mean Offering as different from Sacrifice, but as Sacrifice taken

* Hebr. v. 1.

† Eph. i. 3.

taken in a larger Sense, and different from Sacrifice in a stricter Acceptation. There were under the Old Testament Offerings of *Fine Flour*, otherwise called *Meal-Offerings*, or *Bread-Offerings*; and there were *Animal Sacrifices* of Sheep, Goats, Bulls. The *Meal-Offerings* are here alluded to under the Name of *Offering*, and the *Animal Sacrifices* under the Name of *Sacrifice*. They were Both of them *Gifts* to God, Both of them *Sacrifices* in a just and proper Sense, as *Sacrifice* means a *Present* made to God: And They were Both of them *Types* or *Figures* of what CHRIST was to give to God in the *Sacrifice of Himself*. He is the *Bread of Heaven*, corresponding to the Jewish *Bread-Offering*: He is the *Lamb of God*, corresponding to all the *Animal-Sacrifices*. To Him all those *Material* and *Typical Services* pointed, by Him they were fulfilled, and in Him they expired. He was both the *Beginning* and the *End* of all those Ordinances: He establish'd them at the first, to give Notice of his coming; and by his coming He removed them, and took them away, when He took away our Sins, *nailing them to his Cross*.*

The Text says, CHRIST gave *Himself*: That Word *Himself*, may want some Explanation. His *Person* is constituted of *two Natures*, the *Divine*, and *Human*: He is in *Himself* both *God* and *Man*. The *Priest* who made the *Sacrifice*, is the *whole Person*: The *Sacrifice*, That *Self* in *part* only; for the *Divine Nature* could not *suffer*, nor be made a *Sacrifice*; only It might, and did give *Value* and *Dignity* to the *Human Nature*, which alone was, in Strictness, The *Sacrifice*. Giving *Himself* therefore, must be understood to mean, giving *Himself in Part*. For as a *Martyr*, who gives his *Body* only (not his *Soul*) to be burned, is rightly said to give *Himself* to the *Flames*, because He gives what is *Part of Himself*; so also our *Blessed Lord*, in sacrificing his *Human Nature*, a *Part of Himself*, is rightly said to have sacrificed *Himself*. This *Sacrifice* is variously expressed in Holy Scripture: For, sometimes it is called giving his *Body*, sometimes his *Blood*, sometimes his *Soul*, sometimes his *Life* for Us: All which Expressions amount to the same Thing, namely, that He *died* for Us, died in *our Stead*, a willing *Sacrifice* for the Sins of the whole World. And yet None of those Expressions, however well they are adapted to the customary Forms of Speech, are, in Strictness of Propriety, to be compared with St. PAUL's Saying, that He was *obedient unto Death*†. For, in Truth of Notion and precise Accuracy of Expression, It was

* Coloss. ii. 14.

† Phil. ii. 8.

was his *Obedience* active and passive, which was properly the *Sacrifice*, the acceptable *Offering* unto God. God is a *Spirit*, and the *spiritual* Services are properly his *Delight*. *Perfect Innocence*, and *consummate Virtue*, both in *doing* and *suffering*, were, in *Strictness* of Speech, not only the *Flower* and *Perfection*, but the *very Form* and *Essence* of our *Lord's Sacrifice*. There was found in That unfathomable *Mystery* of *Divine Love*, in our *Lord's dying* for us; there was found, I say, not only *spotless Holiness* and *Purity*, but a most upright *Heart*, and the most devout *Affections*, breathing Nothing but the most ardent *Affections* and *Services* for the *Glory of God*, and the *Salvation of Men*; for the general *Happiness*, if I may so speak, of the whole *Rational System*. Those *Benevolent Services* taken together, and All recommended by the *super-eminent Dignity* of the *Person* so doing, and so *suffering*, were the *Sacrifice of sweet Odour*, the *spiritual Perfume*, acceptable to Him who alone could judge perfectly of the *infinite Worth* and *Merit* of it.—So much for the *Sacrifice*.

3. The *Third Thing* to be considered is the *ALTAR*. *Priest Sacrifice* and *Altar* have commonly been thought *Relatives*, supposed to infer, and imply each other: Tho' That is not strictly and universally true; as might be shewn at large, were This the Place for it, or were it at all proper to enter here into *Niceties* of That Kind.

In This Case however, *Divines* both *Ancient* and *Modern* have thought of an *Altar*, as well as of a *Priest*, and of a *Sacrifice*: And from the *Third Century* at least, down to This Time, The *Cross* whereon our *Lord* suffered, has been generally esteemed, and called the *Altar*. For, as the *Jewish* *Sacrifices* were lifted up upon the *Altar* erected for that purpose, so was the *Son of Man* lifted up by the *Cross**. And as the *Altar* among the *Jews* was used to *bear* or *sustain* the *Sacrifice*, so the *Altar* of the *Cross* bore or *sustained* our *Lord's Humanity*, while *Himself* bare our *Sins* in his own *Body* on the *Tree*†.

Thus far the *Resemblance* and *Analogy* between the *Levitical Altar* and the *Altar of the Cross*, seem to hold very aptly; and to These two *Circumstances* of the *Comparison*, there might be others added of *inferior Note*. Nevertheless, *Similitudes* should not be strain'd too far: Because, tho' they may hit in several *Circumstances*, yet will They not be found to answer in All.

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One Circumstance of an *Altar* is, that it *sanctifies the Gift*, or *Sacrifice* offered upon it.* This Circumstance cannot properly be applied to the *Altar of the Cross*, as *sanctifying the Great Sacrifice*. Wherefore Some very Judicious Divines have here thought of *Another Altar*, besides the *Cross*, a *spiritual Altar*; namely, the *Eternal Spirit*, the *Divine Nature* of our Lord, which in this Case *sanctified the Human*. It is said in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* †, that *CHRIST thro' the eternal Spirit offered Himself without Spot to God*. In This View *CHRIST* was the *Priest*, his *Human Nature* the *Sacrifice*, and his *Divine Nature* the *Altar* which *sanctified the Sacrifice*, which supported it under all Sufferings, and under the Weight of the World's Iniquities laid upon it, and finally added infinite Value and Dignity to it. So then, the *Cross* might be the *Altar* in some Respects, and our Lord's own *Eternal Spirit* might be the *Altar* in others.

But after all, It must be owned that *Scripture* is not clear either for *This Kind of Altar*, or *That*. The *Doctrine of the Sacrifice* is plainly *Scripture-Doctrine*: But the *Doctrine of the Altar* stands only upon *Scripture-Consequences*, drawn by Interpreters, and not perhaps with such Evidence as must extort the Assent of every reasonable Man. What need is there of a *proper Altar* to every *proper Sacrifice*? The Notion of a *Sacrifice*, which means a *Gift to God*, is independent of the Notion of an *Altar* to present it upon. It was *accidental* to the *Jewish Sacrifices* that they required *Altars*, because they were generally to be consumed by *Fire*, in whole or in part, and therefore wanted a *Fire-Hearth* for that Purpose: And it is far from certain that all *proper Sacrifices* were offer'd upon *Altars*. An *Altar* seems to be no more *necessary to every Sacrifice*, than a *Case*, or a *Patine*, or a *Pix* is to every *Gift* or *Present* which any Person may bring to Another. It is a *Circumstance* perhaps of *Decency*, not of the *Substance* of the *Present*. A *Gift* is not the less a *Gift* for being presented naked and simple, without the Formalities of a *Case* to inclose it, or of a *Plate* to offer it upon. In a word then, the *Sacrifice of CHRIST* is an undoubted *Scripture-Truth*: But as to a *proper Altar* for *That Sacrifice*, it is a more disputable Point; about which very wise and good Men may be allowed to think very differently, or to judge as They see Cause.

4. The *Fourth Article* to be considered is the *supreme LAW-GIVER*, to Whom the *Sacrifice* of the *Cross* was made, and by Whom it was graciously accepted. *God the Father*, without Dispute, as *First Person* in the *God-head*, is *Law-giver*.

* Matt. xxiii. 19.

† Heb. ix. 14.

giver in chief; and to Him our Blessed Lord paid the Price of our Redemption, the *Sacrifice of Himself*.

If it be asked, what Need there was of any Sacrifice to a Person so benign, and so mercifully disposed to pardon All repenting Sinners; I say, if this were asked, it might be sufficient to reply that We know the *Fact*: God *did* require a *Sacrifice*, and *such* a Sacrifice; and He knows *what* Need there was for it. However, without pretending to fathom the Divine Counsels, or to understand all the *Reasons of State*, by which an All-wise Governor proceeds, We may presume to observe that Two Special Articles, the *Glory of God* and the *Felicity of Man* have been admirably served by This mysterious Dispensation.

It is for the *Glory of God*, that He is seen not to connive at Offences, nor to be too indulgent towards Sin, while He requires a *valuable Satisfaction* for Offences committed. His *Justice*, his *Holiness* and unspotted *Purity* are hereby glorified before Men and Angels, and the *Honour* of his *Laws* supported in the Face of the whole Word.

On the other Hand, Man's *eternal Felicity* appears to be best secured by the same Means, because hereby Provision is made to keep Him the *more Humble* and modest to all Eternity. *Pride* is reasonably supposed to have been the Sin of *Lucifer*, which *Heaven* it self, and even the Presence of God did not keep Him from. The more exalted his Privileges were, the greater was his Danger, and the surer his Downfall. God has taken Care that Mankind shall have *less Occasion* to *assume*, or to grow *High-minded*. Their Salvation shall stand entirely in the *Merits of another Person*, not at all in their *Own*: And as often as They hope to be *accepted* in God's Sight, it must not be with Robes of their own cleansing (full of Spots and Stains at the best) but with Robes *made white in the Blood of the Lamb* *. This may be to Them for ever a constant Lesson of *Humility*, Which is the Mother of all Virtue, and a sure Foundation of all Happiness, securing Them from the *Temptation* which even *Angels* before lay under, and which at length turned Them out of Heaven, *since reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the Great Day*. §

Seeing then that the *Glory of God*, and the *Felicity of Man*, appear to have been thus most effectually provided for by the *Sacrifice of CHRIST*; no Wonder if That Sacrifice has a very *sweet-smelling Savour*, or is received as the most *delightful Perfume* by Him whose *Goodness* is infinite, and whose Mercies boundless;

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boundless; and, Who having no Interests of his Own to serve, takes Pleasure in every Thing whereby his Creatures may be made to come near Him, and be rendered happy in the Enjoyment of Him.

Having thus run thro' the *doctrinal* Part of the Text, I come next to the *practical* Conclusion drawn from it, drawn by the *Apostle* in the Text it self.

II.

Be ye therefore Followers of God as dear Children [of God] and walk in Love, that is, in Love of the Brethren. If our Blessed Lord condescended to make a *Sacrifice of Himself* to God for the *general Good* of Mankind; *We* ought likewise to make the like Tender of *our Selves*, our Hearts Wills and Affections, and all our Services, to the same God, and on the same Account, namely, for the *general Good* of All our Brethren. Such a Tender as I now speak of, is That *Sacrifice* which the *Gospel* every where points out to Us, and which God expects of Us; to sacrifice the *Old Man*, with the *Affections* and *Lusts*, and to put on the *New Man*, devoting Our Selves wholly to the *Glory of God*, and the *Happiness of our Fellow-Creatures*. In This respect, all *Christians* are represented in the New Testament as making one *Holy Priesthood* (saying to God's commissioned Officers Their peculiar Presidency in it) *to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God by JESUS CHRIST* *. Those *spiritual Sacrifices* are reducible to two Heads, to the two great Commandments, the *Love of God*, and the *Love of our Neighbour*. To the *First Head* belongs the *Sacrifice of Prayer*, which is the *Gospel Incense* †; as also the *Sacrifice of Praise*, which St. PAUL exhorts us to *offer up continually* ‡. To the *Second Head* belongs the *Sacrifice of Acts-deeds*, and of all other *friendly Offices* towards One Another. *To do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such Sacrifices God is well pleased* §. There are other *spiritual Sacrifices* recommended in the New Testament, which are expressive of the *Love of God* and of *Man*, Both in One: As the *Sacrifice of an humble and contrite Heart* ||, and the presenting our *Bodies a Living Sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God* **. We cannot do greater Honour to our *Lord's Sacrifice*, than by thus *copying* after it in the best Manner We are able; and following it (tho' at an infinite Distance) in our own religious Offerings and Sacrifices, such as I have been mentioning.

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* 1 Pet. ii. 5.

§ Heb. xiii. 16.

† Revel. v. 8. viii. 3, 4.

|| Psal. li. 17.

‡ Heb. xiii. 15.

** Rom. xii. 1.

Be We thus *Followers of God, as dear Children of God, and true Disciples of CHRIST.*

But more particularly, as often as We come to commemorate our Lord's High Sacrifice at his Holy Table, be We mindful to make a *Tender of our Selves to Him*, as He made a *Tender of Himself to God*. While We plead the Merits of *That Sacrifice* in our Offices here below (which He also pleads in his Intercessions on our Behalf above) let us throw in our own *secondary Sacrifices* to it; not to *heighten the Value* of it, which already is infinite, but to *render our Selves capable of the Benefits* of it. As there is *Merit* sufficient on His Part, so there must be competent *Qualifications* on Ours: While CHRIST, by the visible Signs of *Bread and Wine*, conveys to Us the *Fruits of his natural Body and Blood*; so ought We, by the same Signs, to present to Him the *mystical Body* whereof We are a Part. By the *Levitical Law*, there was to be a *Meat-Offering* and a *Drink-Offering* thrown upon the Lamb in the daily Service, and Both together were reputed but as *One and the same Sacrifice*. The *Lamb*, without Question, signified CHRIST and his *Sacrifice*: And why should not those *secondary Oblations* thrown upon the *Lamb*, be supposed to signify or prefigure the *secondary Sacrifices, or Services of Christians*, thrown, as it were, upon CHRIST's *Sacrifice*, to strengthen our Claim to it, and to fix our Interest in it? Therefore, while our *Lord's Sacrifice* is represented and pleaded before God on Our Behalf, in the *Holy Communion*; take We Care to send up our *devout Prayers and Praises*, our *Humble Minds and Contrite Hearts*, our *Almsdeeds*, and our *Forgivenesses* of All who have offended Us, our *Holy Resolutions and Pious Vows*; and in a Word, *Our Selves, our Souls and Bodies*, to be a *reasonable, holy, and lively Sacrifice* unto God. So may the *Sacrifice of CHRIST commemorated*, and our *own Sacrifices therewith presented*, be considered as *One Sacrifice of the Head and Members, in Union together*; And so may the *united Offering* be received above, as an *Offering and a Sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling Savour*; acceptable unto Him, thro' JESUS CHRIST our Lord; To Whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, and Glory henceforth for evermore. *Amen.*



S E R M O N XIII.

The History and Character of BALAAM.

NUMB. XXII. 10, 11, 12,

And Balaam said unto God, Balak the Son of Zippor, King of Moab, hath sent unto Me saying, Behold, there is a People come out of Egypt, which covereth the Face of the Earth : Come now, curse me Them ; peradventure I shall be able to overcome Them, and drive Them out. And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with Them, Thou shalt not curse the People : For They are blessed.

THE Story of BALAAM fills up three whole Chapters in this Book of Numbers ; and it is frequently referred to in several other Places, both of the *Old* and *New Testament*. Seeing then that It makes so considerable a Figure in the *Sacred History*, (though It comes in but occasionally) I have thought it may well deserve a distinct Consideration ; and do therefore chuse it for the Subject of our present Meditations.

The *Israelites*, in their Passage through the Wilderness, were to march through the Land of the *Moabites*, a People descended of *LOT*, and over Whom *BALAK* was King at that Time. The *Moabites*, *Ammonites*, and *Midianites*, near Neighbours, were All alarmed at the March of the *Israelites*, and were afraid of Them ; knowing what great Things God had so lately done for Them ; and that neither *SIHON* King of the *Amorites*, nor *OG* the King of *Basan* had been able to stand before Them. The *Israelites* had entirely routed and ruin'd Those two potent Princes, taking Possession of Their Lands : And They had done it with such Dispatch, and in so surprising a Manner, that the Nations round about had
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Reason to suspect that there was Something very extraordinary and supernatural in it. It seems to have been owing to some such Apprehension as This, that None of Them durst oppose the Hebrews, without endeavouring first to engage Heaven on Their Side, which They hoped to do by the help of Incantments.

There was a Famous Magician, or Prophet, of that Time, whose Name was BALAAM, mightily celebrated through all the East: Him They resolved to court with high Promises, and, if possible, to bribe Him over to Their Interests in this Exigency. The Notion They had of Him was, that He was so Divine a Man, so highly favoured by Heaven, that He could turn the Fate of War which Way He pleased, by his Benedictions and Imprecations: For thus said BALAK in his Message to him: *I wot that He Whom Thou blessest, is blessed; and He Whom Thou cursest, is cursed.* The Midianites, and Moabites were Both of Them full of the same Persuasion, as We learn from this Chapter: And We find from other Places of Scripture†, that the Ammonites join'd with Them in the Design of sending to BALAAM. Dispatches were order'd to Him, desiring Him to come and take a Survey of the Camp of Israel, and to curse Them in solemn Form, in Order to their Destruction.

It may look a little strange, that They should trust so little to their own Gods at Home, and should send as far as Mesopotamia for a Prophet to assist Them. Certainly, BALAAM's Reputation must have run very high; or there must have been some very peculiar Reason for that uncommon Method of proceeding. Perhaps They imagined, that the Gods of Their own Country were not able to defend Them against the God of Israel; having so lately seen what the Israelites had done to the Amorites Their Neighbours: Or They might fancy that BALAAM had an Interest with all Kinds of Gods, and might engage Them All to come in to Their Assistance: Or rather, I incline to think that They knew BALAAM to be a Prophet of the same God which the Israelites worshipp'd; and that therefore by His Means They hoped to draw off the God of Israel (Whom They were so much afraid of) from assisting the Israelites, and to incline Him to favour the Moabites, and Those who were join'd with Them.

The Learned are not perfectly agreed as to BALAAM's Character, whether to call Him a Magician, or a Prophet: But it is very evident that He was well acquainted with the Name of the God of Israel, and that He applied Himself to Him,

* Numb. xxii. 6.

† Deut. xxiii. 3, 4.

Him, and to Him only in that Affair. For, when the Elders of Moab and Midian came first to Him, He desired Them to lodge with Him that Night, promising Them to bring Them Word in the Morning, what *The Lord* (that is, what JEHOVAH the God of Israel) should say to Him, in Relation to Their Errand*: Which accordingly He did; and the Answer He brought was What JEHOVAH the God of Israel had really put into his Mouth. This Circumstance plainly shews that He had been used to consult the *True God* in former Times: For otherwise, He could never have pretended now to promise before hand to bring an Answer from Him, or to know for certain that it was His.

There is no Absurdity in supposing that God might have some Prophets (abroad in the Heathen World) who were not of Israel. JOB was undoubtedly such an One: And why might not BALAAM be Another? It is the more likely, because, from the Time of ABRAHAM, God had spread the Knowledge of Himself about the idolatrous World: And all ABRAHAM'S Posterity were originally circumcised, and became Worshippers of the true God; tho', in Process of Time, They revolted, and fell into Idolatry. The Moabites and Ammonites, Whom we are now speaking of, were of distinct Consideration from the Rest of the Heathen World, being the Descendants of righteous LOT, Who was of the same Religion with ABRAHAM. The Midianites too, of Whom most probably BALAAM was, were the Posterity of ABRAHAM, by KETURAH; and Who therefore certainly had, for some Time, the Knowledge of the true God amongst Them: Which makes it the more probable that God might plant some Prophets amongst Them in those early Days, to preserve That true Religion and Worship Which They had received from their Progenitors.

Upon the Whole then, I take the Liberty to conclude, that BALAAM was really a Prophet; and so He is called by St. PETER †. And as He had an Interest and Correspondence with the true God, so the Meaning of the Moabites really was, that He should come and endeavour to draw off the God of Israel from assisting the Hebrews. He did make the Attempt (being hired and bribed so to do) and without Effect. Accordingly it is observed in Deuteronomy, that the Lord would not hearken unto BALAAM ‡. And God Himself says by the Mouth of JOSHUA to the same Purpose, BALAK sent and called BALAAM the Son of BEOR to curse you, but I would not hearken

* Numb. xxii. 8.

† 2 Pet. ii. 16.

‡ Deut. xxiii. 5.

bearken unto BALAAM, therefore He blessed you still.* These Considerations shew that BALAAM had address'd Himself to the God of Israel, in Hopes to have his Licence and Authority for cursing the Israelites. From whence We may reasonably infer, that BALAAM had been his Prophet some Time before, and that, in Confidence of such his high Relation to God, He presumed to consult Him once and again upon That Occasion. Having thus far cleared our Way, We may now proceed,

- I. To consider more distinctly the History of BALAAM, as laid down in Scripture.
- II. To make some Reflections upon it.

I.

The first Mention which we have of this Man is in this Chapter of the Book of Numbers. The Occasion of his being concern'd with the Children of Israel has been already intimated. Next, let Us observe How he behaved Himself upon That Occasion, What the Effect was, and what became of Him in the End.

To do Him Justice, He behaved Himself extremely well when the Message was first brought Him from King BALAK. He consulted God upon the Matter laid before Him, made a faithful Report of the Errand which the Embassadors came upon, received God's Answer, and submitted to it; acquainting the Messengers that God would not give Him leave to curse That People; no, nor so much as to go along with the Embassadors. Thus far He carried Himself well and wisely, like an Honest, Pious, Upright Man. But afterwards came Other Messengers, more in Number, and greater in Dignity than the Former: And They press'd Him vehemently to comply with BALAK's Request; promising Him rich Presents, and honourable Preferments, in a Word, any Thing, or every Thing which He could ask or desire. To This again He made Answer, that, if BALAK would give Him his House full of Silver and Gold, yet He could not go beyond the Word of the Lord his God†. This was well said, and was the plain Truth. And here by the Way observe, that BALAAM, in these Words, professes his Attachment to the Lord JEHOVAH, as his God: Which is a farther Confirmation of what I before hinted, that He was really a Prophet of the true God.

But

* Josh. xxiv. 10.

† Numb. xxii. 18.

But to proceed : After This, whether prevail'd upon by Importunity, or soften'd too much by the Charms of Honour and Riches (which dazled his Eyes) the good Man began to stagger ; and He yielded so far as to consult God again upon the same Thing, tho' He had before had an *absolute*, and *peremptory Denial* : This was his *first false Step* ; for it was *tempting God*, and *making too free with the Divine Majesty*, forgetting both his Duty and Distance. God then gave the Man *Leave to go with the Princes* ; but in such a Manner, as might have made Him sensible that it *had been better* if He had not *ask'd* it ; and that his going would be to *no Purpose*, since He should still be *restrain'd from cursing the People* ; which was What He went for, and was the sole End and Design of the *Princes* who came to call Him, BALAAM however, having already set his Heart too much upon the *Bribes*, readily accepted of the *Concession* made Him ; and that very Morning He set out on his Journey with the *Princes of Moab*. God was angry with Him for being *so forward* in this Matter, Which He might more wisely have *declined*, tho' Leave was given Him : And besides, BALAAM conceived *Hopes* that He might at Length have *Permission* to *curse* the Children of *Israel* : Otherwise It was a wild Undertaking to pretend to go at all. God seeing the Temper of the Man, and What He had in his Heart, sent an *Angel* to stop Him in the Way, and to deter Him effectually from his Purpose. *He loved the Wages of Unrighteousness*, as St. PETER observes, and *was rebuked for his Iniquity* ; *the dumb Ass speaking with Man's Voice*, forbad the *Madness of the Prophet* *. The History of that Prodigy is related at large in the Book of *Numbers*, and is a Matter well known.

Some have been of Opinion (with MAIMONIDES the famous Jew) that the whole Story of BALAAM and the *Ass* was a *Vision* only, or a *Dream*, and transacted merely in *Idea*. But there is Nothing in the Text of MOSES to countenance such a Persuasion ; nor are the Reasons, suggested for this Opinion, of weight sufficient to persuade Us to lay aside the *plain literal* Construction.

It is with better Colour that Others, admitting the *literal Construction*, have further thought that the whole Affair was *symbolical*, and might admit of a *mystical*, as well as a *literal Interpretation* ; tho' This also is no more than Conjecture. But They who take this Way, suppose that the Beast which the Prophet rode upon, might be an *Emblem* of BALAAM spurr'd on by BALAK his Master. The *Ass* saw the Danger

by

by the Way, and made some *Efforts* to avoid it, while the Rider was perfectly blind: And in like Manner the Prophet had seen that *God was against the Design*, and He made some *Efforts* to turn aside from it; but was still vehemently press'd on, and push'd forwards by K. BALAK. I forbear to mention other resembling Circumstances, which have afforded Reason for supposing that the Whole was emblematical, and intended for BALAAM's Instruction,* that He might see his Folly and retreat in Time.

But He went on; and God permitted Him now to proceed (according to his own Devices) to reap the Fruits of his Ambition and Avarice; only taking care all the Time, that He should not drop the least *Curse* upon the *Israelites*; but should speak as directed by God Himself, and deliver Nothing but *Blessings*. The Prophet accordingly, after several fruitless Essays to prevail with God to let Him curse the People, was still constantly withheld from doing it; and instead of cursing Them, he altogether blessed Them three times; and at length concluded, prophesying of the Downfall of the *Moabites*, and foretelling many and prodigious Successes of the People of *Israel*. Thus was King BALAK's Design utterly frustrated: And instead of rewarding the Prophet, He was bitterly incens'd against Him. And now BALAAM, being reduced to these Straits, began to perceive how foolish an Errand He had come upon, and how little He had gained by the Expedition. However, having sail'd in One Way, He hoped now to make BALAK some Amends in another: And, as God had now given the Man up to his own mad Counsels, He next entered into as wicked and impious a Design as could well be imagined. He advised the *Moabites* to think of some Means of drawing the *Israelites* into some heinous Offence against Their God; assuring Them, that there was no possible Way of getting an Advantage over *Israel*, unless They could be first drawn into Sin, that so a Breach might be made between God and Them. This was a Kind of *Machiavilian Policy*, shrewd and deep laid, but cursed and diabolical. It had not the Effect which BALAAM aim'd at in it (God so far defeating his Counsels) but the Event was, the seducing great Numbers of *Israelites* into *Whoredom* first, and then into *Idolatry*; and It ended in the Destruction of 24000 of God's People.

This Wickedness of BALAAM is particularly taken Notice of by St. JOHN, in the Revelations; Who, speaking to the Church of Pergamus in the Name of CHRIST, says: *I have a few things against Thee, because Thou hast there Them that hold the*

the Doctrine of BALAAM, Who taught BALAK to cast a Stumbling-block before the Children of Israel, to eat Things sacrificed unto Idols, and to commit Fornication*. St. PETER also alludes to the Same Thing, speaking of Some Persons, Who, as He says, had forsaken the right Way, and were gone astray, following the Way of BALAAM the Son of BOSOR, who loved the Wages of Unrighteousness†. St. PETER calls Him Son of BOSOR. In the Old Testament He is called Son of BEOR: But BEOR and BOSOR are Both the same Name in the Original, only differently pronounced: And perhaps This may be one Instance among others wherein St. PETER followed a Galilean Pronunciation: But That by the Way only. I should take Notice, that St. JUDE also alludes to the same Thing with what St. PETER and St. JOHN refer to; rebuking some Persons for running greedily after the Error of BALAAM for Reward‡. The Persons there pointed to, were a wretched Sect of False Teachers which started up in the very Infancy of the Christian Church. They held it lawful to follow carnal Lusts, to commit Fornication, Adultery, Incest, and other Impurities. This palatable Doctrine suited the corrupt Taste of the Voluptuous, and brought the Teachers in much Applause, and many a fair Present from their carnal Hearers. And now, because Their Doctrine was very like BALAAM's, and the principal Motive to it in the Teachers was Avarice, and a Desire of flattering and pleasing Others in Their Lusts; therefore Those Teachers were compared to BALAAM, and Their Doctrine to His. Their Hebrew Name also was Balaamites, as their Greek Name was Nicolaitans; Both which signify the same Thing, viz. Lords, or Leaders of the People. And thus the Name of BALAAM revived, as it were, in the first Ages of the Gospel, but much to his Dishonour, to make his Memory the more odious and detestable to latest Posterity. But I return to the History where I left off.

After BALAAM, by his cursed Counsels, had led Israel into a Snare, and God had taken severe Vengeance of his own People for being so weakly misled; He then gave Orders to Moses and the Israelites to march against the Midianites, and smite Them, in Revenge for the Wiles which, by the Advice of BALAAM, They had practised, and thereby beguiled Israel. Accordingly, They went out, and made a dreadful Slaughter of the Midianites, destroying Their Country, and dividing the Spoil. And here it was that BALAAM at length reap'd the Wages of his Iniquity, being slain among the Rest

with

* Rev. ii. 14.

† 2 Pet. ii. 15.

‡ Jude ver. 11.

with the Edge of the Sword*. Such was the End of that unhappy Man; once a Prophet, and, as it seems, highly in Favour with Almighty God; but beguiled with the Charms of Ambition and Covetousness, falling off by little and little (as God withdrew his Grace, which He had made an ill Use of) till at length He came up to the highest Pitch of Wickedness; becoming a Seducer, and setting Himself at the Head of the Rebellion against God, doing infinite Mischief by his Diabolical Counsels; and instructing Princes in such Arts of cursed Policy, as ought to render his Name infamous to all Posterity.

I should farther observe, that, for a standing Memorial of God's Resentment for What had been done by the Ammonites and Moabites against his People of Israel; He made an Order that No Ammonite or Moabite should be permitted to enter into the Congregation of the Lord, till after the tenth Generation, because of What They had done in the Matter of BALAAM. The Words of the Law are; *An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the Congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth Generation.*—*Because They met You not with Bread and Water in the Way, when You came forth out of Egypt; and because They hired against Thee BALAAM the Son of BEOR, of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse Thee*†. The Meaning of which Law is, that, tho' an Ammonite, or a Moabite, should become a Convert to the Jewish Religion, and conform to Their Law and Ceremonies in every Respect, and become a compleat Member of the Jewish Church; yet He should not have the Privileges of marrying with an Israelite, but should be debarred from it, He and his Posterity for ten Generations; Which is interpreted, in NEHEMIAH, to mean for ever‡. Such was the Mark set upon the Ammonites and Moabites for Their Offence in That Instance: And BALAAM's Infamy was perpetuated by the same Law, being expressly mention'd in it as the Man who had been hired to curse God's People.—But enough hath been said of the History of BALAAM; pass We on now,

II.

To make some Reflections upon it; as it may indeed afford Us plentiful Matter for it.

I. In the first place observe, that there is no Time of Man's Life wherein He may not be tempted, or may not be in Danger of falling off from God and Goodness; Which should be an Argument to Us for constant Care and Watchfulness over Our Selves. Even Those Whom God hath favoured in a

* Numb. xxxi. 8. Josh. xiii. 22. † Deut. xxiii. 3, 4. ‡ Neh. xiii. 1.

very particular Manner, and with Heavenly Gifts and Graces, are no more secure than Others, if They take not proportionable Care. I say Nothing of SOLOMON, or Others who might here be mention'd : BALAAM is the Instance now before Us, a Prophet of the most High God, and probably advanced in Years, since his Fame had spread wide and far. His Standing was not so firm; but that an unlook'd for, and a powerful Temptation shook his Stedfastness, and brought Him down from the Heights He had attain'd in God's Favour, to a most forlorn and wretched Condition.

2. Observe farther, how dangerous a Thing it is, so much as to attend, or listen to the Charms of Wealth and Honour : For a Gift will sometimes blind the Wise, and a Bribe will beguile their Hearts. BALAAM look'd too much upon the golden Presents, and was too sensibly struck with the Sound of Honour and Preferments ; Which made Him the less consider upon how slippery Ground He stood, and how dangerous an Affair That was to concern Himself in. Put it even in the best Light, and imagine that He might have had God's Leave to do what BALAK desired : Yet, would a wise and a good Man have been forward to set God to Sale, and to make a Trade of the Favours sent Him from above ? ELISHA would not suffer so much as his Servant to take a Gift of a great Man whom He had cured of a Leprosy : So unbecoming a Thing did He think it to sell and make Merchandize of spiritual Privileges. Had BALAAM been of that Temper, He would never have been missed in the shameful Manner He was, but would have held fast his Integrity to the End.

3. Observe thirdly, that when God sees Men leaning too far to ambitious or covetous Desires, and not wise enough to take such gentle Hints as might be sufficient to call Them back ; He then leaves Them to pursue Their own Hearts Lusts, and lets Them follow Their own Imaginations. When He at first prohibited BALAAM from cursing the People, and from going with the Messengers, That was Indication sufficient. A wise Man, after That, would have absolutely refused to treat or parley with any Embassadors whatever upon the same Errand. But BALAAM had set his Heart upon the Bribes, and was become warm and eager in the Business. So God permitted the foolish Man to go on as his Inclinations led, and to run his utmost Lengths of Folly and Madness. Since He would not retreat in Time, nor know when He had done enough (tho' God had given Him sufficient Intimations) He was at length permitted to proceed in his own Way, and to his own Destruction.

4. Observe

4. Observe next, how foolish a Part a Man acts, and how He exposes Himself to Contempt and Scorn, as well as Danger, when He takes upon Him to follow his own Way and Humour, and will not have God for his Guide. It was a weak Thing in BALAAM to ask God a *second Time*, after God had abundantly signified his Pleasure : And It was still weaker, after He had received a *second Answer* discouraging Him from any Thought of cursing the People, for Him to go on with the Princes of *Moab*, and to offer Himself to BALAK, when He could do Him no Service. But, to shew some good Inclination towards serving BALAK, He resolved to make very free with Almighty God ; tho' He had carried his irreverent Familiarity too far before. He was now come to BALAK, and *Something* he must do ; tho' as to the *main Thing*, which was *cursing the People*, He knew very well that God had *tied up his Mouth*. However, He makes BALAK prepare *Altars* and *Sacrifices*, and He would thereby try again and again, What God would say to Him. A dangerous Thing thus to tempt, and trifle with the eternal God ! Well ; The Effect was, that, much against his Inclination, He was made to *Bless* the People whom He came to *Curse* ; Which highly offended BALAK, and made the *Prophet* ridiculous in the Eyes of All there present. Yet This was not sufficient, but the foolish Man goes on to *tempt God again*, and with the *same Success* ; till BALAK was perfectly enraged against the *Prophet*, and God let them *Both* see, that *His Will* should prevail, and not *Theirs*.

5. Observe farther, that, when once stubborn and wilful Men have run such Lengths in *Opposition* to the *Will of Heaven* ; God then gives Them up to a *reprobate Mind*, and lets Them fall from one Degree of Wickedness to another. So it was in BALAAM. He had been provoking God, Time after Time, by the foolish, irreverent, and conceited Part He had been acting : And now God left Him to do a great deal worse ; to be *Counsellor* to BALAK in as *wicked Policy* as Hell it self could invent ; to *seduce the Israelites* into *Fornication*, and into the abominable Lewdnesses which went along with the *Feasts* and *Revellings* made in Honour of BAAL-PEOR. A Man who could give *such Counsel* as That, must have first shaken off all *Honour, Respect, or Reverence* for the *Living God* ; which indeed appears to have been BALAAM's Case in the End.

6. One Thing more We may observe from his History, which is This ; that the *Spirit of God* may sometimes *vouchsafe* to come upon a *very wicked Man* (so far as concerns the

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extraordinary

extraordinary Gifts) without reforming or influencing the same Man as to his Life and Morals, in the way of ordinary Operation. These two Things are very distinct, and may often be separate; as in BALAAM at That Time, and in JUDAS afterwards. BALAAM had undoubtedly the Gift of Prophecy, even while He was doing amiss, and tempting Almighty God. For the Spirit of God came upon Him*, and made use of his Organs in the delivering several remarkable Prophecies fulfilled in their Season: As the rising Strength, and growing Greatness of the Israelites: The Fall of Moab, and of Edom, which was to be effected in the Time of King DAVID: The Destruction of Amalek, which came to pass somewhat sooner, in K. SAUL's Time: The Overthrow also of the Kenites by the Hand of the Assyrians: And, What is more than all, the Overthrow of the Assyrian Conquerors Themselves by the Hands of the Chittim, that is, of the Macedonians; which was executed under the Conduct of ALEXANDER the Great. These were great and valuable Prophecies, and most of them, besides their more immediate Reference, had a further View to the coming of CHRIST: And hence it is that this History of BALAAM deserved the more especial Notice, and is made to fill up so many Chapters in MOSES. But when We find such considerable Prophecies delivered by the Mouth of an ungodly Man; give God the Glory, and let the Shame rest where it ought. The Prophecies are of standing Use in the Church; but the Prophet will be no Gainer by them: Our Lord Himself has fully interpreted this Case, in the Words following—Many will say to Me in that Day, Lord, Lord, Have we not prophesied in thy Name? and in thy Name cast out Devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto Them, I never knew You; depart from Me Ye that work Iniquity†.

* Numb. xxiv. 2.

† Matt. vii. 23, 23.



S E R M O N XIV.

The Appearance of SAMUEL, to SAUL at *En-dor*.

1 SAM. XXVIII. 15, 16.

And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast Thou disquieted Me, to bring Me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make War against Me, and God is departed from Me, and answereth Me no more, neither by Prophets, nor by Dreams: Therefore I have called Thee, that Thou mayest make known unto Me What I shall do.

Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost Thou ask of Me, seeing the Lord is departed from Thee, and is become thine Enemy?

THIS Chapter contains a most remarkable Passage of sacred Story: Melancholy indeed it is, but entertaining withal; and, when considered in all its Views, highly instructive. King SAUL is here introduced, not in his Glory and Splendor, as when first called to the Throne of *Israel*, but in his Decline of Life, and his most deplorable Circumstances, which his many and grievous Transgressions had brought Him into. Vengeance, which had long hovered and waited, now advanced with large and quick Strides, and his Fate drew on apace. He perceived it, and was very sensibly affected with it. One cannot express, nor indeed conceive, the Pains and Agonies He must then have felt in his Mind. He had abandoned God for some Time, and He was now sadly sensible that God had abandon'd Him: Yet He had a great Desire to consult Him once again, and to obtain a kind Answer from Him in his Day of Distress. He put on the outward Garb of a Devotee, while his Heart was still hard as ever, and his Mind not changed. His present Fears, rather

than any Thing of true Penitence, roused Him up, and made Him have Recourse to God; prepared at the same Time, if God should not answer, to make his next Resort to a *Sorceress*, and by Her to come at SAMUEL's Ghost.

But first He applies to God. The *Philistines* bore hard upon Him at that Time with a formidable Army, and so near to Him, that there was but a Valley between Them and Him; whereupon He was greatly distress'd. In such pressing Exigency, He attempted every Method He could think of (by *Dream*, or by *Urim*, or by *Prophecy*) to obtain some instructive Answer from God: But God would not hear Him, nor take the least Notice of Him, knowing Him still to be the same wicked Man as before; afflicted indeed, but not more humble; sorrowful, but not penitent, nor at all changed in the inward Man.

SAUL, thus finding Himself repulsed and rejected, like a distracted Man resolved to struggle with his Fate to the utmost, and to run any Lengths of Madness. Tho' God had deserted Him, yet He was weak enough to imagine that SAMUEL however (that is, the *Ghost* of SAMUEL; for He had been dead about four Years before) might be prevailed upon to listen to Him, and to return Him a kind Answer. But in order to come at SAMUEL, He repairs to a *Sorceress*, a Woman of EN-DOR, skill'd in *Magick Art*, and fam'd for conjuring up *Ghosts* (as the World believed) by her *Sorceries*, or *Enchantments*. It is not material here to enquire into the Mysteries of that Art, or whether it ever hath, or can perform so much as it pretends to. It is sufficient that Fame so reported of *That Woman*, and SAUL believed it; and the *Woman*, trusting to her Art, undertook the Thing: But God Himself, as it seems, interposed, and both conducted and govern'd the whole Transaction. There hath been great Variety of Sentiments among the Learned, and very different Accounts have been given, of this famed Adventure.

I. I will therefore endeavour to settle what I take to have been the *Truth of the Case*. And,

II. Proceed to the *practical Use* and Application of it.

Some have thought that there was Nothing more in it than *Trick* and *Legerdemain*, whereby a cunning Woman imposed upon SAUL's *Credulity*; making Him believe that she saw an Apparition, when she really saw None; at the same Time contriving that a Voice should be heard speaking unto SAUL in

in such Manner, and in such Words, as are related in that Chapter.

But this Opinion is highly *improbable*. For, if the *Woman* had the *sole conducting* of That Affair, intending only to *impose* upon SAUL, she would most undoubtedly have contrived to make the *pretended* SAMUEL's Answer as agreeable and pleasing to the King as possible, and That for her *Own Sake* especially; for Fear of offending SAUL, and to save her own Life, as well as to procure from Him the larger *Gratuity*. She would never have told Him (she durst not have told Him) that *He Himself* should be shortly slain, and his Sons with Him, and that the *Host of Israel* should be delivered into the Hand of the *Philistines*; as we read Verse the 19th. Indeed, the whole Turn of SAMUEL's Speech, in this Chapter, is too rough and ungrateful, too grave and solemn, I may add also, too full of Truth and Reality, to have been owing only to her Contrivance, or Invention.

For It must be observed farther, that What was here spoken as from SAMUEL, was really *Prophetic*, and was punctually fulfilled a few Days after. Here were Things foretold, which neither the *Woman* Her self, nor even her *Familiar Spirit* could certainly have foreseen. None but God Himself could have revealed the Secret. And how unlikely is it that God should make use of this *Sorceress* as a *Prophetess*, and should give Her the Honour of revealing his Counsels; at the same time concurring with Her in the *Imposition* put upon SAUL, making Him believe that SAMUEL appeared and talk'd, when there was no SAMUEL there!

For these Reasons, we may presume to think and judge, that the Matter here related was not all a *meer Juggle* or Contrivance of an *artful* Woman, but *Something more*. There was most certainly an *Apparition* in the Case, either of SAMUEL's Ghost, or of Some Other Spirit personating SAMUEL. And here again *Criticks* are much divided, Which to chuse. Upon considering this Matter very carefully, with the Reasons offered on both Sides, I incline to think that SAMUEL really appeared, that is, SAMUEL's Ghost; not by any *Power of Incantment*, but by God's Direction and Appointment, for a *Rebuke* to SAUL, and in the Way of Punishment to Him for His great *Presumption* in doing What He did. For the Message, thus brought Him, was exceeding rough and severe; greatly added to the Load of his Misfortunes, and enhanced the Weight of his Troubles. The Reasons for this Interpretation are as follow.

1. This *Method of proceeding* is very conformable to What God hath been pleased to do before, in *other Cases* of like Nature. As, when King BALAK had Recourse to *Sorceries* and *Divinations*, in Hopes to procure some *Relief*, or *fair Promises* at least from them, *God Himself interposed*, and so overruled BALAAM, and all his *Divinations*, that K. BALAK could obtain no *favourable Answer* from them, but quite the *Reverse* *.

In like Manner, when King AHAZIAH had sent to consult BAALZEBUB, the Demon of Ekron, to know whether He should recover of the Sickness He then lay under, hoping, no doubt, to obtain a *Favourable Answer* there, as probably He might have done; *God Himself* took care to *anticipate the Answer* by ELIJAH the Prophet, who assured the Messengers, meeting Them by the Way, that Their Master AHAZIAH should not recover, but should surely die †.

Thus probably was it in the Case of SAUL: When He was in Hopes of a kind Answer from SAMUEL, and, it is likely, would have had a very favourable one from some pretended SAMUEL, some Demon in his Shape, if the wretched Woman could have raised such a One by her *Sorceries*; God was pleased to disappoint both the *Sorcerefs* and Him, by sending the true SAMUEL with a true and faithful Message, and quite contrary to what the Woman or SAUL had expected; Which so confounded and disorder'd Him, that He instantly fell down into a Swoon, and could no longer bear up against the bitter Agonies of his Mind.

2. This Interpretation is plain and natural, and least forced of any, agreeing well with the Words of the Text. The Story is here told in such a Way as One would expect to find, upon the Supposition it really was SAMUEL. It is said, that the Woman saw SAMUEL, she cried out, &c. †. And that Saul perceived that it was SAMUEL §. How could He perceive it, if it was not so? Or why is it said, that He perceived it, rather than that He imagined, or supposed so? In the Sequel of the Narrative, it is added, SAMUEL said unto SAUL ||; and again, Then said SAMUEL ¶; which would not be true, if it were only a personated SAMUEL, a Familiar in SAMUEL's Shape: And It is strange that the Text should thus word it, if SAMUEL were not really there. It is as plainly said here, that SAMUEL appeared and talk'd **; as it is elsewhere said that MOSES and ELIAS appeared and talk'd with our Blessed Saviour.

* Numb. xxiii.

† 2 Kings i.

‡ 1 Sam. xxviii. 22.

§ —ver. 14.

|| 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

¶ —ver. 16.

** —ver. 12, 14, 15, 16,

Saviour. So that if we consider the *Letter* of the Text, and the *most obvious* and *natural Construction* of it (which We should not depart from, without the greatest Necessity) We shall be obliged to confess, that the Apparition was *really SAMUEL*, and No Other.

3. This Construction is *very ancient*, the *most ancient* of any; and seems indeed to have been the *general Persuasion* of the *Jewish Church*, long before the Coming of CHRIST.

The Author of the Book of *Ecclesiasticus* lived about 300 Years before CHRIST, within 100 Years, or less, of the last Prophet MALACHI. He was a considerable Man in his Time, and as likely to know the true Sense of Scripture, and to give the general Sentiments of the *Jewish Church*, as Any Man of that Age. What He thought of this Matter which We are now upon, may be there seen, where, speaking of SAMUEL, He says thus: *After his Death He prophesied, and shewed the King his End, and lift up his Voice from the Earth in Prophecy, to blot out the Wickedness of the People* †. This Author plainly enough supposed, that it was SAMUEL Himself who appeared in Person, and prophesied to King SAUL.

The *Greek Translators* of the Old Testament, who lived not long after that Time, were in the same Persuasion; as appears by an additional Note which They inserted in the xth Chapter of the *first Book of Chronicles*, where They say, that SAMUEL the Prophet gave the Answer to King SAUL, when He enquired of the Sorcerers ‡.

In the same Sentiments was JOSEPHUS the *Jewish Historian*, who lived in the Apostles Times; and thus thought Many of the *earliest Christian Fathers*. So that This Construction of the Text is certainly *very ancient*, and for a long Time pass'd current: Nor do I see any sufficient Reason why it should be rejected. But because *later Criticks* have some slight Things to object, which have been thought material; I shall briefly consider What those *Objections* are which have moved Them to depart from the *Letter*, and from the *ancient Construction*.

1. They object, that the Text speaks of *bringing up SAMUEL* as it were *out of the Ground*; whereas, if it had been SAMUEL, He should rather have *come down from Heaven*.—But This Objection is no more against the Supposition of it's being SAMUEL's Ghost, than against the supposing it to be any other Spirit whatever: For We have Reason to believe, that even *Evil Spirits* have not their Dwelling under Ground, but in the Air rather; and the Devil therefore is stiled, in

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† Matt. xvii. 3. ‡ Eccles. xlv. 29. † 1 Chron. x. 13.

the New Testament, *The Prince of the Power of the Air* *. But the true Reason why SAMUEL is represented as being brought up, is, because his Body was under Ground, to which his Soul was still conceived to bear a Relation; and it was upon this chiefly, that the popular prevailing Notion of all *Separate Souls* being in the *Heart of the Earth*, was founded: Which popular Notion, as it obtained among the *Jews*, and is often alluded to in the *Language of Scripture*, adapting it self to vulgar Capacities, it is no Wonder that the Relation of this Apparition of SAMUEL should be accommodated thereto: So that Nothing can be concluded, in this Case, merely from the Manner in which SAMUEL is said to come up.

2. But it is further objected, that the Apparition here in the Person of SAMUEL, complains to SAUL, of being disquieted or disturbed by Him: And It is thought not likely, that the Rest of God's Saints should be liable to be disturbed by *Incantments*, or any *Power of Witches*, or *Devils*.—Very true; neither the *Sorcerers* nor all the *Powers of Hell* could have given any Disturbance to his peaceful Ghost: But God Almighty, with whom the *Spirits of just Men made perfect* dwell, might please to send SAMUEL upon that Occasion, to deliver the Message from Him: And as SAUL's Presumption and Rashness was the Occasion of the whole Thing, He deserved a Reproof for What He had done: And what can One better call it, than disquieting, and disturbing the Repose of SAMUEL, and bringing Him out from his Rest; which SAUL is said to have done, because He occasioned the doing it? Nevertheless, SAMUEL, to be sure, thought it no Trouble to come upon God's Errand, and to execute the Divine Commands; tho' it was proper to rebuke SAUL for his Part in it, and to speak of that Affair after a natural Way, and in Conformity to common Apprehensions.

3. But It is further objected, that It is hard to give a Reason why God, Who had refused to answer SAUL either by *Dreams*, or by *Urim*, or by *Prophets*, should at length vouchsafe to answer Him in such a Way as This, and by the Mediation of a wicked Sorcerers.—But as to this Matter, if the Fact be true, It is not necessary for Us to assign the Reason for God's Dispensations: Be That as it will, It is very certain that God did interpose and conduct that whole Affair, as I before remarked; otherwise there could not have been so plain and so true a Prediction of Things to come. But it may be easy to account for God's answering SAUL in this Way, as it was exposing and afflicting Him more severely than in any other, after He had

* Eph. ii. 2.

had richly *deserved* it : And God might hereby shew his *prevailing Power* even over *Incantments* and *Charmers* ; that, when vain Men attempt even to go to *Hell for Counsel*, He will *meet Them* and *baffle Them* even *there*.

4. But it is still further objected, that the *Predictions* of the Apparition, under the Name of SAMUEL, were not *true*, and therefore could not be SAMUEL'S.—This Objection is to the Purpose, and would be *decisive*, if it were *just* : But the *Things foretold* were *exactly verified*, and the *Event* answered to the *Prophecy* in every Particular : Only It is observed, that the Things came not to pass till *four or five Days* after, whereas the *Prediction* seems to limit the Time to the *next Day* ; for It says, *To Morrow, shalt Thou and thy Sons be with Me* *. But then again it must be acknowledged, and is *acknowledged* by the *Best Criticks*, that the Word which we render in English, *To Morrow*, may as well be rendered, *Very shortly*, which it *really signifies* in this Place.

5. Well, but is it not said, *To Morrow shalt Thou and thy Sons be with Me* ? Was SAUL then, so wicked a Man, to go after Death to the same *Blessed Place* with *righteous SAMUEL* ? No, nor is it likely upon the *other Supposition*, that so good a Son as JONATHAN should fare no better in another State, than so *bad* a Father : But, in Truth, the Text determines Nothing at all of the *State of Either* after Death. All that is meant by the Words, *Thou shalt be with Me*, is, Thou shalt die, Thou shalt be as I am, that is, *dead*, and in the *Regions of Separate Spirits* ; and so it proved.

I have now run thro' the most considerable Objections which have been pleaded against interpreting the Words, of SAMUEL *Himself*, that is, of SAMUEL'S *Ghost*, as I interpret Them : But none of those Objections seem to be of Weight sufficient to persuade Us to depart from the *Letter*, and the *most ancient Construction*. I conclude therefore, as before, that it was SAMUEL *Himself Who appeared and prophesied* ; not called up by that wretched Woman, or her Demons, but sent thither by God to rebuke SAUL'S *Madness*, in a most affecting and mortifying Way ; and to deter all Others from ever applying to *Witches or Demons for Assistance*, when refused Comfort from God.

II.

Having thus settled the Sacred Story, I shall now proceed to the *Practical Use* and Application of it. For indeed I would not have set so light either by *your Time* or *my own*,

as to have chosen a Subject of *mere Curiosity*, to *entertain the Ear only*, without *improving the Heart*. But I take this Part of Scripture-History to be *highly instructive* and edifying; and therefore well deserving our close and serious Meditations.

1. *First*, observe how *careless* and *unthinking*, Men are apt to be in their *Prosperity*, and till the *Hour of Distress* comes. SAUL was a Man of as much Coldness and Indifference in Religion, as Any Man could be; swayed, for the most Part, by his own Humour and Vanity. He never thought of *consulting God*, or asking Directions, all the Time He was *persecuting righteous DAVID* from City to City, hunting Him thro' every Quarter of the Kingdom, and driving Him out into a strange Land. He never thought of *consulting God*, when He barbarously undertook to *murder fourscore and five of the Lord's Priests*, innocent Men, and who had deserved no Ill at his Hands. But now at last, when He perceived *his own Life to be in Danger*, as if *That alone* were precious in God's Sight, or *That alone* worthy of the Divine Care and Notice; then He began to *apply to God*, and *pretended a Respect and Reverence for Him*, tho' all the while his Heart was far from Him. Danger and Distress will sometimes frighten and dismay a hardened Sinner; and *That is all*: For, It is not any *relenting Sorrow* for his Sins which troubles Him, but the Sense of What He apprehends of the Pain and the *Destruction just falling upon Him*.

2. Observe, *Secondly*, that in such Cases, generally, God very justly turns away his Ear, and will *vouchsafe no Answer* in the ordinary Way, to such *grievous Offenders*. Of Such as These it is that God says, in the Proverbs, *They shall call upon Me, but I will not answer; They shall seek Me early, but They shall not find Me**. And good Reason why; Because He had before called, and They refused; He had stretched out his Hand, and No Man regarded; They had set at Nought all his Counsel, and would none of his Reproof. There is a certain Degree of Forbearance and Long-suffering, beyond Which even the Divine Goodness will not extend. Provocations may proceed to such a Height, as to leave no Room for farther Mercy. *Patience long-abused* will at last give Place to Vengeance. God will then withdraw his Grace, and lock up his Favours, deserting the impenitent hardened Wretch, and abandoning Him to the wild Pursuit of his own Inventions. This is a Matter of dreadful Consideration to all inveterate, impenitent Offenders: And yet it should

* Prov. i. 28. † Prov. i. 24, 25.

should not be a *Discouragement* to Any Man against *repenting*; Because the very *Disposition*, or Inclination to *Repentance* is a *hopeful Symptom*, and is a promising Argument in his Favour, that his *Day of Grace* is not *past*, and that it is not yet too late to return.

3. Observe further, from the History before laid down, how miserable, how melancholy a Thing it is, for a Man to have *sinned to such a Degree* as to be *entirely abandoned by God*, and to have the *best Friend* in the World become his *Enemy*. There is no Condition so disconsolate, so deplorable as That is: Let Him sit down to invent and contrive ever so long; there is no Expedient that can help Him, no Contrivance but what will turn against Him, and will *increase* his Misery, instead of *relieving* it. What could unhappy SAUL do in his pressing Difficulties! God *would not* assist Him, and no One else *could*. He might think of his Court-Flatterers, or of his ablest Counsellors, and of his Troops and Armies: But Nothing in this World could give Him Comfort, or afford Him Relief. Then He thought of dead SAMUEL, whom He had often despised and slighted while *alive*: And, to shew how a sinking Man will lay hold on every Twig, He was foolish enough to imagine, that He might *steal a Favour* from God's Servant SAMUEL, when He could not obtain one from God Himself. He made the Experiment, and in a very odd Way, as you have heard; and how at length it ended, I have described at large. Let this sad Example convince Every Man who attends to it, how impossible, *how impracticable it is, to lay any Scheme of Happiness which shall at all answer*, without first taking Care to *make God his Friend*: Without This, all our Toils and Endeavours come to Nothing: It is but building in the Air, or labouring for the Wind. What can a Man do, when God becomes his Enemy, or but ceases to be his Friend! Can He hide Himself from His Presence! Can He run beyond the Reach of His Power! If He could climb up into Heaven, God is there; and if He goes down into Hell, even there also will his Hand find Him, and his Vengeance pursue Him. Search the whole Universe for a Moment's Protection, and it is all to no Purpose: For *all is in God's Hands*; to Him all Creatures bow, and every Element submits to his Will and Pleasure. The Sum then is, that the *only Way to Happiness*, is, to *strike up an Interest, a League of Amity with God*, and never to swerve from it, for any Temptation, any Allurement whatsoever. Make but Him your Friend, and in Him you have *All*; as on the other hand, by losing Him, you are sure to lose every Thing that is *valuable* together with Him.

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The practical Conclusion from the *Whole* is, that We learn to set a true Value upon God's Favour and Friendship, and that We use our utmost Endeavours both to procure and to preserve it: And, as Nothing will do it but a good and holy Life, and That certainly will; We may from hence infer the absolute, indispensable Necessity of making Religion our first and principal Care, as it is our last and our greatest Concern. So much for the *Use* and *Application* of this famous Part of Sacred History.

4. There is a slighter, incidental *Use*, which might have been taken Notice of by the Way, which yet I pass'd over, and shall here but just mention; and That is, the Argument to be drawn from this Instance, to prove that *Souls exist Separate from the Body after Death*; and do not only exist, but are awake and active, and have their intellectual Powers in Perfection. But as That may be abundantly proved from other Places of Scripture less liable to Dispute, We need not insist much upon This. Indeed I cannot say that there is, in the whole Scripture, any plain and unexceptionable Instance of a *departed Soul's appearing and talking* upon Earth, if This be not One: MOSES once, and ELIAS came down and talk'd with our Blessed Saviour; but whether in the Body, or out of the Body, We cannot tell, God knoweth: However, the Question, as to *Separate Souls existing and acting after Death*, does by no Means depend upon any Examples of *Apparitions*, but is sufficiently proved by many and clear *Testimonies of Sacred Writ*, as might be shewn at large, were this the proper Place for it: But I designed only a short Hint of this Matter, that I might not seem entirely to have pass'd it over thro' Forgetfulness, or Haste.

And now I should beseech You, after this short Interruption, to let your Thoughts return to the *principal Thing* of all; namely, the Necessity of looking after, and procuring God's Friendship by a good and holy Life: Which, that we may all seriously think of, and with good Effect, God of his Mercy grant, thro' JESUS CHRIST our Lord!

A
SUMMARY VIEW
OF THE
DOCTRINE
OF
JUSTIFICATION.

JUSTIFICATION.
OF
DOCTRINE
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SUMMARY VIEW



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SUMMARY VIEW OF THE DOCTRINE, &c.

THE Doctrinal Points of *Regeneration* and *Renovation* have been lately brought upon the Carpet; and I have, upon another Occasion, taken the Liberty to throw in some few Thoughts upon them. Now, the Subject of *Justification* being nearly allied to the Former, and seeming also to want some farther illustrating, by Way of Appendage or Supplement to the Points before-mention'd; My present Design is to give you a *summary View* of it, by considering,

I. What the *Name* imports,

II. What the *Thing* contains,

III. How it stands *distinguished* from *Renovation* and *Regeneration*.

IV. What are the *concurring Causes* on God's Part, and on Man's, to produce it, and to preserve it.

V. What are the common *Extremes* which Many have been apt to run into on this Head, and how they may be avoided.

I.

The *First Article* is the *Name*, which ought to be *defined* before the *Thing*; and, in Order thereto, must be first *distinguish'd*.

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There appears to be sufficient Ground in *Scripture* for distinguishing *Justification* into *active* and *passive*: For, as the Name *Regeneration*, when denoting an *Act* or *Grant* of God, bears an *active* Sense, and when denoting a *Privilege* received by *Us*, bears a *passive* Sense; such also is the Case with Respect to the Name *Justification*. It means either God's *Grant*, for it is God that *justifies* *; or it means *Our Privilege, Endowment, Possession* holden of God†, as We are said to be *justified* by Him. *Justification* always supposes two Parties, One to give, and Another to receive; whether without any *Act* at all on the *Receptive* Side, as in the Case of *Infants*, or whether accompanied with *receptive Acts*, as in the Case of *Adults*, who may be properly said to *accept* and *assent* to, as well as to receive or enjoy. God, the supreme Law-giver may be considered either as a *Rector* and *Governour* contracting with *Man*, and laying down the *Terms* of his *Covenant*; or as a *Judge*, giving *Sentence* according to the *Terms* laid down. Correspondently, *Man* may be considered either as *accepting* the *Terms* upon his *entering into Covenant*; or as *pleading* them afterwards at the *Bar of Justice*, at the *Divine Tribunal*. There is no more Difference between those two several Views of the same Thing, than there is between the *issuing out a general Grant* for the *Benefit* of All Persons Who shall duly and properly *accept* it; and the *actual conferring the Benefit of that Grant* upon the Persons so *accepting*: But Some have chosen *one* View for the easier and apter explaining (as They conceived) the Nature of *Justification*; and Some have preferred the *other*, for the like Reasons‡. The general Way has been to understand *Justification* as a Kind of *Law-Term*, expressing a *judicial Transaction*. *Protestants* of every Denomination have set Them-

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* Rom. iii. 25, 26, 30. iv. 5. viii. 33. Gal. iii. 8. Tit. iii. 7. Rom. iv. 25. v. 18. N. B. In the two last Texts, the Word for *Justification* is Δικαιωσις, which bears an *active* Sense.

† Δικαιωσθην, which may as well be rendered *Justification* as *Righteousness*, appears to mean *our Righteousness*, which We hold of God's *Grace* by Faith in Christ Jesus, in the following Texts; Rom. i. 17. iii. 5, 21, 22. ix. 30, 31. x. 3. 1 Cor. i. 30. 2 Cor. v. 21. Philip. iii. 9. 2 Pet. i. 1. Matt. vi. 33.

‡ "It is indeed to be granted, that *Justification* importeth, not making of a Man righteous, but declaring Him and accounting Him righteous, treating Him, and dealing with Him as righteous: All This is true; and yet I will not grant that it is so properly understood to be the *Act* of God as sitting upon the Throne of *Judgment* (whether according to Mercy, or Justice) as the *Act* of God contracting with *Man* for everlasting Life, upon Condition of submitting to the *Covenant* of *Grace*, and the *Terms* of it." Thorndike, Epil. B. ii. p. 40. Conf. Pufendorf. jus fecial. divin. p. 144, 166, 172, 319, 349, 353.

selves to defend it*: And even *Romanists* also, Many of Them, have readily submitted to it†. So that the Word *Justification*, in this View, and in the *active* Sense, will signify God's pronouncing a Person *just* and his *accepting* Him as such ‡; while, in the *passive* Sense, it will signify *Man's* being so declared, and thereupon *accepted* into new Privileges, and his enjoying the Benefits thereof||. So much for the *Name*.

II.

I am next to consider What the *Thing* granted and received, really is, or What it contains.

Here We are to observe, not barely What the *Word* it self strictly and grammatically signifies, but what it stands for, and must stand for as made use of in this particular Case, or in such and such *Circumstances*. The *Evangelical* Notion of it must be govern'd by *Evangelical Principles*: It is a complex Notion which takes in more Ideas than the *Name* would necessarily signify in different *Circumstances*.

1. *Remission of Sins* is most certainly one considerable Part, or Ingredient of *Evangelical Justification*: Not that the *Name*, abstractedly considered, imports it, but the *Nature of the Thing*, in this Case, requires it. Had our *First Parents* preserved their *Innocence* entire, They would have been thereupon justified as inherently and perfectly just, needing no *Pardon*: But Men in a *lapsed State*, being All of Them more or less *Sinners*, cannot be accepted as Persons who have had no Sin, but as Persons discharged from it. I need not here say, how, or upon what Account; because That will be considered hereafter in its proper Place: But in the mean Time it is self-evident, that the *Justification* of a *Sinner* must include *Remission of Sin*. I may add, that such *Remission of Sin* properly signifies a *Discharge from the Penalty* due to it; not from the *Blame* it carries with it; except it be in such a Sense as

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ZACHARIAS

* Bishop *Andreus's* Serm. p. 76. *Field*, p. 291. Bishop *Bull*, p. 411, &c. *Frid. Spanhem.* Fil. Tom. iii. p. 276. *Vitringa*, *Observat. Sacr.* Lib. iv. c. x. §. vi, &c. Tom. i. p. 346. *Budeus*, *Instit. Theol.* p. 931. *Deylingius*, *Obi. Sacr.* Tom. iii. 361.

† Vid. *Gul. Forbes*, *Consid. Modest.* p. 98. edit. 2.

‡ *Justificatio evangelica* quæ Deum Auctorem respicit, definiri potest, *Actio Dei* quæ poenitentem absolvit, propter Merita Christi *viua Fide* accepta & applicata. *Fogg. Theolog. Speculat. Schema*, p. 427.

|| Si consideretur (*Justificatio*) cum Respectu ad Conditionem *Justificati*, est *Mutatio Status*, quem Resipiscens obtinet erga Deum, unde cessante reatu, propter Merita Christi *viua Fide* applicata, non est *Condemnationi* obnoxius. *Fogg. Theol. Specul.* p. 427, 428.

ZACHARIAS and ELISABETH were pronounced *blameless** for so all good *Christians*, living up to the *Gospel-Terms*, and persevering to the End, will be pronounced *blameless* at the last Day : And so are They esteem'd of here, in the mean Season, by God who searches the Hearts†.

2. But, besides *Remission of Sin*, a *Right* and *Title* to Life eternal, but founded only upon *Promise*‡, is included in the *Gospel-Notion* of *Justification* : Not that the bare Force of the *Word* requires it (for a Man might be properly said to be *justified*, Who is *acquitted* from *Penalty*, tho' not intitled to a *Reward*) but We know what the *Scripture-Promises* are; and that a *Discharge from Penalty* hath thereby a sure *Title to Rewards* connected with it : Therefore *Evangelical Justification* comprehends according to the full *Notion* of it, not only a *Title to Pardon*, but a *Title to Salvation* also, a *Title to Both* for the Time being||.

3 To These some learned Divines have added the *Sanctification* of the *Holy Spirit* §, as a *third Ingredient*, to compleat the Nature or *Notion* of *Justification* : But that Persuasion is scarce tenable, unless We first qualify it with proper *Distinctions*. If by *Sanctification* We understand *Renovation* of the inward Man, That has no Place in the *Justification* of *Infants*; besides that even in *Adults* it is rather a *Qualification* for the Privilege, than the *Privilege itself* : But if by *Sanctification* of the *Spirit* ¶, which goes along with all *valid*, and of course with all *saving Baptism*** ; That indeed must necessarily be supposed in all *Baptismal Justification*, as a Part of it, or an *Ingredient* in it; inasmuch as *Justification* cannot be conceived without some Work of the *Spirit* in conferring a *Title to Salvation*. In This Sense, Every Person *justified* is *ipso Facto* sealed and consecrated by the *Spirit* of God. But the Truth of this Matter will more fully appear under another Head in the Sequel.

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* Luke i. 6.

† Vid. *Grab.* in annotatis ad *Bulli* Op. p. 414. Edit. ult.

‡ *Debitor enim factus est* [Deus] non aliquid a Nobis accipiendo, sed quod Ei placuit promittendo. Aliter enim dicimus Homini *debes Mibi* quia dedi Tibi ; & aliter dicimus, *debes Mibi* quia promissisti Mibi.--- Illo ergo Modo possumus exigere dominum nostrum, ut dicamus, *redde quod promissisti*, quia fecimus quod *justisti* : Et hoc Tu fecisti, quia *Laboꝛantes* juvisti. *Augustin.* Serm. clviii. de verbis Apost. Rom. viii. p. 762. Tom. v. Edit. Bened.

|| Vid. *Bull.* exam. censur. ad Animadv. iii. p. 537, 538.

§ Vid. *Gul. Forbes.* *Consid. Modest.* p. 112, &c.

¶ See *Bingham* XI. 1. 6.

** See *Regeneration stated*, &c, p. 28, 29.

Having thus briefly considered *what Justification is*, and *what it contains*; I proceed to observe how it is *distinguish'd* from *Renovation* and *Regeneration*, to Both which it is indeed very nearly allied.

1. By *Renovation* I understand the *Inward renewing* of the *Heart and Mind**; the same that commonly goes under the Name of inward *Sanctification* of the *Spirit*. This is necessarily pre-supposed, in some Measure or Degree, with respect to *Adults*, in their *Justification*; because *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*†, no Man shall be entitled to *Salvation*; that is to say, no Man *justified*. But tho' This Consideration sufficiently proves that *Sanctification* and *Justification* are *near allied*; yet it does not prove that they are the *same Thing*, or that one is properly *Part* of the other. An *essential Qualification* for any *Office, Post, Dignity, or Privilege*, must be supposed to go along with that *Office, Post, &c.* But still the *Notions* are very *distinct*, while the *Things* themselves are in *Fact* connected of Course. So stands the Case between *Sanctification* and *Justification*: The One is a *Capacity* for such a Grant; the Other is the *very Grant* it Self: The one is an *infused and inherent Quality*, God's Work *within us*; the other an *outward Privilege, or extrinse Relation*, God's gracious Act *towards us*. In short, *Sanctification* denotes the *Frame of Mind*, the holy Disposition; while *Justification* denotes the *State* which a Man is in with respect to God, his *Discharge from Guilt and Penalty*, his *Christian Membership*, his *heavenly Citizenship*, his *Gospel-Rights, Pleas, and Privileges*.

Again; *Sanctification* is commonly understood of the *Mind, or Soul* only; while *Justification* is of the *whole Man*. The Title which the *Body* hath to a future *Resurrection* or *Redemption*, is included in the very Notion of a *justified Man*.

It may be further noted, that *Justification may be supposed*, where *Sanctification* (according to the full Notion thereof) is *not*; as in the Case of *Infants* newly baptized; They are indeed thereby *sanctified* in a certain Sense; but not in the Sense of a proper *Renewal of Mind and Heart*. These Considerations sufficiently mark out the *Difference* between *Justification* and *Sanctification*.

2. I am next to observe, how *Justification* differs from *Regeneration*. They differ but little as to the *main Things*; since the *Grants* made, and the *Blessings* conferr'd, are much the *same*.

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* See *Regeneration* stated, &c. p. 12. &c.

† Hebr. xii. 14.

in Both: But still there is *some* Difference, and that both *notional* and *real*.

So far as the *main Things* are the *same*, They are however express'd under *different Figures*: For in *Regeneration*, God is considered as a *Father* begetting us into a new Life of Light, Blessings, and Privileges: But in *Justification*, He is considered either as a *Proprietor* making over the same Grants, or as a *Judge* giving favourable Sentence from the Throne of Mercy.

Another *Difference* is, that *Regeneration*, in the strict Sense, expresses no more than the *first Admittance* and *Entrance* into such and such Rights and Privileges; and therefore comes but *once*: But *Justification* is a Thing *continued** during the whole Spiritual Life: One is giving and receiving *Life*; The Other is giving and receiving *Growth* and *Increase*.

A third *Difference* is, that *Regeneration*, in the stricter Sense † of that Name, may admit of the Distinction of *Salutary*, and *not Salutary*: Whereas *Justification* admits not of that Distinction at all, being *salutary* in the *very Notion* of it, as it imports a *Right* and *Title to Salvation*, for the Time being, on the *Gospel-Terms*.

A fourth *Difference* is, that *Regeneration*, once given and received, can never be *totally lost*, any more than *Baptism*, nor ever want to be *reiterated*, in the whole Thing ‡: But *Justification* may be granted and accepted, and take Place for a Time, and yet may *cease* afterwards, both *totally* and *finally* §. These several

* Vid. *Gal. Forbes*, p. 261. *Bulli Op.* p. 437. And compare my *Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 329, 330, 345, 362.

† Of the *stricter* and *larger* Sense of the Word *Regeneration*, see *Regeneration stated*, p. 18, 19, 27, 30.

St. *Austin* followed the *stricter* Sense when He said: *Simon ille Magus natus erat ex Aqua & Spiritu*, Tom. ix. p. 169.

In another Place, He followed the *larger* Sense, which takes in *Renovation* to compleat the Notion of *Regeneration* considered as *salutary*.

Qui natus est ex Deo habet Caritatem—videat si habeat Caritatem, & tunc dicat, natus sum ex Deo.—Habeat Caritatem; aliter non se dicat natum ex Deo. *Augustin.* Tom. iii. Part ii. p. 859.

Hence it appears, that, as the Word *Faith* sometimes signifies simply *Faith*, and sometimes *saving Faith*, so the Word *Regeneration* admits of the like two-fold Meaning.

‡ See *Regeneration stated*, &c. p. 9, 12, 16, 17, 26, 30.

§ See *Article XVIII.* And *Homily* on good Works, p. 49. Compare *Bulli Op.* p. 668. *Augustin Conf.* c. xi. *Truman.* Great Propit. p. 153, 178. *Hejlin.* *Histor. Quinquartie.* Part i. p. 17, 28, 33, 36. Part iii. p. 31, &c.

The Sense of our Church on this Head, is manifest from this single Consideration; that She looks upon it as *certain by God's Word*, that all *Children baptized* are so far *justified*, inasmuch as if They die before ac-
tual

several Articles of *Difference* sufficiently shew that the *Names* are not tantamount, but that they stand for *Things different*; *similar* in some Respects only, not in all.

IV.

Having considered *what Justification is*, and *how distinguished*, I may now pass on to enquire into its *constituent Causes*, *principal* and *less principal*, *efficient* and *instrumental*, *divine* and *human*, and the like: For there are *several Causes*, more or less contributing to the *Justification* of a Person; that is, to the making Him a *sure Title to Salvation* for the Time being.

1. *God the Father* is here to be considered as *Principal*, as He is the Head and Fountain of all. Of That there can be no Question, and therefore I need not say more of it: The *divine Philanthropy* is of *prime Consideration* in the whole Thing.

2. In the next Place, *God the Son* is here to be considered as the *procuring* and *meritorious Cause* of *Man's Justification*, both by his *active* and *passive Obedience* *. This, though it may be disputed by such as will dispute any Thing, or every Thing, yet seems to be generally admitted among the sober Divines of all the great Divisions of *Christians*.

3. In the third Place, *God the Holy Ghost* is here to be considered as the *immediate, efficient Cause*: For Proof of which, We need go no farther than our Lord's own Words, that, *except one be born of Water and of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God* †; which is as much as to say, He cannot have a *Title to Salvation*, cannot be *justified*. Neither need we here put in the Restriction, *ordinarily* so far as the *Spirit* is concern'd: His *immediate Agency* must be supposed, in *all Cases*, and upon *every Supposition*.

4. After the three *Divine Persons*, principally concurring and co-operating in *Man's Justification*, We may next pass on to the *subordinate Instruments*: And here come in the *Ministry*, the *Word*, and the *Sacraments* ‡; but more particularly the

tual Sin, They are *undoubtedly saved*. Now it cannot be doubted but that many Who have been baptized in *Infancy*, may, and do fall afterwards, both *totally* and *finally*: Therefore our Church must of Consequence allow and suppose, that Persons once *justified* may *totally* and *finally* perish.

* See *Gul. Forbes* Consider. Modest. p. 67, &c. *Toornike* Epil. Book ii. p. 254, &c. *Pufendorf*. Jus Feclal. p. 187.

† John iii. 5. comp. 1 Cor. vi. 11. xii. 13. Tit. iii. 5, 6, 7.

‡ Sacramenta sunt *Medis* offerentia & exhibentia ex Parte Dei; Fides *Medium*

the Sacrament of *Baptism*; which perhaps may here deserve a *large* and *distinct* Consideration, as it has been too often omitted, or but *perfunctorily* mention'd, in Treatises written upon the Subject of *Justification*.

If We look either into the *New Testament*, or into the *ancient Fathers*, We shall there find that the Sacrament of *Baptism*, considered as a *Federal Rite* or *Transaction* between God and Man, is either declared or supposed the ordinary, necessary, outward *Instrument* in God's Hands of Man's *Justification*: I say, an *Instrument* in God's Hands, because it is certain, that in that sacred Rite, *God Himself bears a Part* *, as *Man also bears His*; and that in both Sacraments (as our Church teaches) *God embraces Us, and offereth Himself to be embraced by Us* †. According to the natural Order of *Precedency*, the authorized *Ministry* is *first* in Consideration ‡; the *Word* next; then *hearing*, and *believing* with a penitent Heart, and lively Faith; after That, *Baptism*, and therein the first solemn and certain *Reception* of *Justification*, which is afterwards continued by the same lively Faith, and the Use of the *Word*, and of the other Sacrament.

Now, as to *Baptism*, and its being, ordinarily, the necessary outward *Mean* or *Instrument* of *Justification*, the immediate and proximate *Form* and *Rite* of *Conveyance*; That will be easily made appear from many clear Texts of the *New Testament*, as also from the concurring Verdict of *Antiquity*, the best Interpreter of the sacred Writings.

First, The Texts I shall here take in their Order. *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but He that believeth not, shall be damned* §. Here the Word *saved* amounts to the same Thing in the main with *justified*, being opposed to *condemned*: And it is farther observable, that the *believing* here must be understood of a lively Faith; yet That alone is not said to *save*, or *justify*, but with the Addition of *Baptism*, or in and with the Use of *Baptism*: For, whatever some may please to teach of *Faith only* as *justifying*, the *exclusive Term*, most certainly, is not to be understood in Opposition, either to the *Work* of the *Father*, or of the *Son*, or of the *Holy Ghost*;

Medium recipiens & apprehendens ex Parte nostra. Gerbard. Loc. Comm. Part IV. p. 309.

Tantum dicimus, quemadmodum Fides est quasi Manus nostra, qua Nos querimus & accipimus; Sic Verbum & Sacramenta esse quasi Manus Dei, quibus Is nobis offert & confert quod Fide a nobis petitur & accipitur. Vossius de Sacram. Vi & Effic. Op. Tom. vi. p. 252.

* See *Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 16, 17, &c.

† Homily on the Common Prayer and Sacraments, p. 370.

‡ Rom. x. 13, 14, 15. Tit. i. 3.

§ Mark xvi. 16.

Ghost; or to the standing *Means* of Conveyance which They have chosen. The warmest Contenders for Faith *alone*, are content to admit that the exclusive Term, *alone*, is opposed only to every Thing else on *Man's Part* in *justifying*, not to any Thing on *God's Part*: Now, I have already noted that *Baptism* is an *Instrument* in *God's Hand*, who *bears his Part* in it; and therefore *Baptism*, in this View, relates to *God's Part* in *justifying*, and not to *Man's*. It is not indeed said in the Text just cited, that He who is not *baptized* shall be *damned*, as it is said of Him, who *believeth not*. God reserves to *Himself* a Liberty of *dispensing* in that Case. At the same time, He has made no *Promise*, or *Covenant* to *justify* Any One *without* the Use of *Baptism*: So that still *Baptism* must be look'd upon as the ordinary standing *Instrument* of *Justification* on *God's Part*; and We have no certain *Warrant* for declaring any one *justified* independently of it.

The next remarkable Text is, *except one be born of Water and of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God, cannot see the Kingdom of God* *. Where We may observe, that *born again* in the 2d Verse, is interpreted of *Baptism*, (*Sign and Thing signified*) in the 5th; and the emphatical Word, *cannot*, is twice made Use of in That Case. What Room then is there left for pretending any direct and positive *Promise* from God to *justify* Any Man *before*, or *without* that ordinary *Mean*? Say that *Faith* is our *Instrument* for receiving *Justification*, which is saying enough; still *Baptism* must be *God's Instrument*, ordinarily, for *applying* or *confering* it, in *Virtue* of what our Lord Himself, in that Place, has *twice* solemnly declared. But I pass on.

In the *Second* of the *Acts*, We read these Words of St. PETER to the *Jews* of That Time: *Repent and be baptized Every One of You in the Name of JESUS CHRIST, for the Remission of Sins, and Ye shall receive the Gift of the HOLY GHOST* †. Now, it is to be noted, that true *Repentance* in such Case *presupposes* some Degrees of preparatory *Grace* and *lively Faith*; and yet *Baptism* was to *intervene* too, in Order to *Remission*, that is, in Order to *Justification*, and the Gift of the *in-dwelling* of the Holy Spirit of God.

So again in the Case of St. PAUL, at his Conversion to Christianity: He had been a *true Believer* from the Time when He said, *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do* ‡? But he was not yet *justified*: His Sins remained in Charge for *three Days* at least longer: For, it was so long before ANA-

B b 4

NIA3

* John iii. 3, 5. See *Regeneration stated*, &c. p. 31

† Acts ii. 38.

‡ Acts ix. 9.

NIAI came to Him, and said, *Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy Sins, calling on the Name of the Lord* *. Baptism was at length his grand *Absolution*, his *Patent of Pardon*, his *Instrument of Justification* granted Him from Above: neither was He justified till He received *That Divine Seal*, in as much as his Sins were upon Him till that very Time.

Pass We on to the Epistle to the Romans, where St. PAUL says; *know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into JESUS CHRIST, were baptized into his Death*, (that is, into a Participation of the Death and Merits of CHRIST, thro' which also We die unto Sin) *Therefore We are buried with Him by Baptism into Death* †: In Baptism is the first formal solemn Death unto Sin, in the plenary Remission of it; which comes to the same as to say, that there also commences our Justification entire: All before was but preparatory to it, as Conception is to the Birth ‡.

The same St. PAUL says; *By one Spirit are We All baptized into one Body* §. Now, if We are first incorporated into the mystical Body of CHRIST by Baptism, it is manifest that We are there also first justified: For, no Man strictly belongs to CHRIST till He is incorporated; neither is Any One justified before He is incorporated, and made a Member of CHRIST, a Citizen of Heaven.

St. Paul also says; *Ye are All the Children of God by Faith in CHRIST JESUS*: For, as Many of You as have been baptized into CHRIST, have put on CHRIST ¶. Words very observable, as plainly intimating, that ordinarily a Person is not made a Child of God by Faith, till that Faith is exerted in, and perfected by, Baptism.—Faith in Adults, is the Hand whereby They receive the Privilege of Adoption and Justification; while the Sacrament is the Hand whereby God dispenses it.

God is the Donour; and He can dispense the Grace to Some without Faith, as to Infants; and to Others without Baptism, as to Martyrs principally, and to Catechumens prevented by Extremities: But still the ordinary Rule is, first to dispense it upon a true and lively Faith, sealed with the Stipulations mutually pass'd in Baptism.

So

* Acts xxii. 16.

† Rom. vi. 3, 4. See Wessius in Loc.

‡ Fiunt ergo Inchoationes quædam Fidei, Conceptionibus similes: Non tamen solum concipi, sed etiam nasci Opus est, ut ad Vitam perveniatur æternam.

§ Augustin. de Divers. Quest. ad Simplic. L. I. p. 89. Tom. VI.

¶ 1 Cor. xii. 13. See my Review, &c. p. 367, &c.

¶ Gal. iii. 26, 27.

So again, We read in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, as follows: CHRIST also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of Water, by the Word*; That is, by the Words used in the Form of Baptism, as St. CHRYSOSTOM interprets †. If then Baptism is the ordinary Instrument whereby CHRIST cleanses the Members of his Church; by the same He must be supposed to justify Them; as cleansing and justifying are Words of like Import, in this Case, meaning the same with Remission of Sins, which is one great Part of Justification.

St. PAUL elsewhere speaks of his new Converts, as putting off the Body of the Sins of the Flesh by Christian Circumcision, that is, Baptism, buried with CHRIST in Baptism, and risen with Him thro' the Faith of the Operation of God,—having all their Trespases forgiven Them ‡. What is This but saying, that They were justified, instrumentally, by Baptism? The same Thing is, at the same Time, said to be brought about by Faith § (which is indeed the Instrument of Reception on Man's Part, as Baptism is of Conveyance, on God's Part) but still That very Faith is supposed to be exerted in, and compleated by, Baptism, before it justifies, so far as it does justify.

I proceed to a noted Text in the Epistle to TITUS: Not by Works of Righteousness, which we have done, but according to his Mercy He saved us by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost—that being justified by his Grace, we should be made Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life ||. It is manifest, by comparing the three Verses together, that Baptism is here made the Mean thro' which, or the Instrument by which, the Holy Spirit of God worketh Regeneration, Renovation, and Justification; and that Justification, the last named, is, in Order of Nature (tho' not in Order of Time) the

* *Ephes.* v. 25, 26. Significatur heic omnino Baptismus, verbo junctus, tanquam Instrumentum Purificationis. *Wolhus* in Loc. Compare *Pearson* on the Creed, Art. X. p. 368.

† *Chrysostom* in Loc. Tom. XI. p. 145. item *Damascen.* in Loc. Op. Tom. II. p. 190.

‡ *Coloss.* ii. 12, 13. See *Wolhus* in Loc. *Wall.* Hist. of Infant Bapt. Part I. c. ii. *Defence*, p. 269, &c. *Blackwall Sacra. Classics*, Tom. II. p. 189.

§ Διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργίας τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ea inferitur Efficacia & Virtus Dei, quæ Fidem in Colossensibus procreavit, similis illi, quæ Christum excitavit ex mortuis. *Wolfs* in Loc.

|| *Tit.* iii. 5, 6, 7. Compare *Regeneration stated*, upon this Text. De Baptismo hæc accipienda esse Patres crediderunt:—Nec aliter Interpretes recentiores tantum non Omnes. *Wolhus* ad Loc.

the last of the Three, as the *Result* of the two former, in the same Work of Grace, in the same Federal Solemnity. It may be noted by the Way, that *Baptism*, in this Text, is not considered as a *Work of Man*, but as an *Instrument, Rite, or Federal Transaction* between *God and Man*.

In the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, we read thus: *And having an High-Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our Bodies washed with pure Water: Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith*; &c. In these few Words are pointed out the meritorious Cause of our *Justification*, express'd by the sprinkling, viz. with the *Blood of CHRIST*, in Allusion to the *Blood of the ancient Sacrifices*; the instrumental Mean of Conveyance, *Baptism*, express'd by the washing of our Bodies; and the instrumental Mean of Reception, express'd by the Word *Faith*. The *Merits of CHRIST*, applied in *Baptism* by the Spirit, and received by a lively Faith, compleat our *Justification*, for the Time being. I know not whether the *Apostle's* here laying so much stress upon our *Bodies being washed with pure Water*, might not, among several other similar Considerations drawn from the *New Testament*, lead the early *FATHERS* into a Thought which They had, and which has not been so commonly observed; namely, that the Application of *Water* in *Baptism* secured as it were, or sealed the *Body* to an happy *Resurrection*: while the *Spirit* more immediately secured the *Soul*; and so the whole *Man* was understood to be spiritually cleansed, and accepted of God, in and by *Baptism* †. They had also the like Thought with respect to the *Elements* of the other Sacrament, as appointed by God for insuring the *Body* to an happy *Resurrection* along with the *Soul* ‡. Whether that ancient Rationale of the two

Sacra-

* Heb. x. 21, 22, 23.

† The Thought is thus express'd by an eminent Father of the second Century:

Corpora enim nostra per Lavacrum illam quæ est ad Incorruptionem Unitatem acceperunt; Anima autem per Spiritum: Unde & utraque necessaria, cum utraque proficiunt ad Vitam Dei, &c. Irenæus L. I. c. xviii. p. 208. Edit. Bened. Compare

Tertullian de Baptismo, c. iv. p. 225. De Anima, c. xl. p. 294.

Cyrill Hierosol. Catech. III. p. 41.

Naxianzen Orat. XL. p. 641.

Hilarius Piet. in Matt. p. 660. Edit. Bened.

Nysenus Orat. de Bapt. Christi, p. 369.

Cyrill Alex. in Joann. L. II. p. 147.

Ammonius in Catech. in Joann. p. 89.

Damasceus, de Fid. Orthodoxa, L. IV. c. ix. p. 260.

‡ *Irenæus, L. IV. c. xviii. p. 251. L. V. c. ii. p. 293, 294.*

Sacraments be not, at least, as good as any *modern* Ones, I leave to be considered, and pass on.

St. PETER says, *Baptism doth also now save us; not the putting away of the Filth of the Flesh, but The Answer* [Stipulation] *of a good Conscience towards God, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* *.—What I have hereupon to observe is, that Baptism *saves*: That is, it gives a just Title to Salvation; which is the same as to say, that it conveys *Justification*. But then it must be understood not of the *outward Washing*, but of the *inward, lively Faith*, stipulated in it, and by it. *Baptism* concurs with *Faith*, and *Faith* with *Baptism*, and the *Holy Spirit* with Both; and so the *Merits* of CHRIST are savingly applied. *Faith alone* will not ordinarily serve in this Case; but it must be a *contracting Faith* on *Man's Part*, contracting in Form, corresponding to the *Federal Promises* and *Engagements* on *God's Part*: Therefore TERTULLIAN rightly stiles Baptism *Obsignatio Fidei*†, *Testatio Fidei*, *Sponsio Salutis*‡, *Fidei Pactio*§, and the like. But I shall say more on the Head of *Faith* in a distinct Article below.

There is yet another very observable Text, which might have come in, in its Place; But I chose to reserve it to the last, for the winding up this *Summary View* of the *Scripture-Doctrine* on this Head. It runs thus: *Such were Some of You: But Ye were washed* (viz. in Baptism) *but Ye were sanctified; but Ye were justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God* ||. I think it better to render it *were*, or *have been*, than *are*, as best suiting with the *Original*, and with the, *were*, just going before; But the Sense is much the same either Way. Here are *three concurrent Causes* of *Justification* (together with *Sanctification*) mention'd together: *Viz.* The *meritorious Cause*, the *Lord Jesus*; the *efficient and operating Cause*, *The Spirit of our God*; and the *Instrumental Rite* of *Conveyance*, *Baptism*. From these several Passages of the *New Testament* laid together, it sufficiently appears, not only that *Baptism* is the *ordinary Instrument* in *God's Hands* for conferring *Justification*; but also, that ordinarily there is no *Justification* conferred either *before* it, or *without* it. Such *Grace* as precedes

Baptism,

Tertullian de Resurr. Carnis, c. viii. p. 330.

Cyrril Hierosol. Mystag. IV. p. 321.

Paschasius de Corp. & Sangu. Domini, c. xix. p. 1602.

* 1 Pet. iii. 21. See my Review, c. xi. p. 434, 435.

† Tertullian de Poenit. c. vi. p. 125. Conf. de Resurr. Carn. c. xlviii. p. 355.

‡ Tertullian de Bapt. c. vi. p. 226.

§ Tertullian de Pudicit. c. ix. p. 562.

|| 1 Cor. vi. 11. See Wolfius in Loc. Bull. Op. Lat. p. 411, 422.

Baptism, amounts not ordinarily to *Justification*, strictly so called *: Such as follows it, owes it's force, in a great Measure, to the *standing Virtus* of *Baptism* once given †.

Secondly. To confirm what has been here proved from *Scripture*, or rather to shew the more plainly that we are not mistaken in so interpreting, I may next briefly add the *concurring Verdict* of the *Antients*, bearing Testimony to the same Doctrine, down from St. BARNABAS of the first Age, about the Year 70, to the End of the IVth Century, or later.

BARNABAS declares that *Baptism* procures *Remission of Sins* ‡: Therefore it procures *Justification*. He declares farther, that Men descend into the Water full of *Sins and Pollutions*: Therefore, by his Account, They are not *justified*, ordinarily, before *Baptism*. Some *Moderns* have imagined the *Antients* built their *strict Notions* of the *Use and Necessity* of *Baptism*, upon too rigorous a Construction of JOHN iii. 5. But it is certain, that They had those *strict Notions* before St. JOHN's Gospel was written; and that BARNABAS, in particular, pleaded Texts out of the *Old Testament* for the same Doctrine, and that later FATHERS had several other Texts to produce, besides JOHN iii. 5. such as I have cited: But I proceed.

HERMAS, of the same Century, affirms, that a Christian's Life is and shall be saved by Water §; which amounts to the same with what We have before seen in St. PETER, and admits of like Interpretation. His elsewhere declaring *Remission of Sins* to belong to *Baptism* ||, imports as much as saying that *Justification* hangs upon it. In another Place, He expresses his Sense of the *Necessity* of *Baptism* to *Salvation* (consequently, to *Justification*) still more positively — “ Before Any One receives the Name of the Son of God, He is liable to *Death*: “ But when He receives that *Seal*, He is delivered from *Death*, “ and is assign'd to *Life*. Now, that *Seal* is *Water*, into “ which

* Vid. *Augustin*. de divers. Q. ad Simplic. L. I. p. 89. T. VI. item *Epist.* CXCIV. p. 710. Tom. II.

And compare *Regeneration stated*, &c. p. 13.

† Vid. *Augustin* de Nupt. & Concupisc. L. I. p. 293. Tom. X. Compare my *Review*, &c. p. 328, 329.

‡ Το Βάπτισμα τὸ φίρον εἰς ἀφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. *Barnab. Epist.* c. xi. p. 36. ἡμεῖς μὲν καθ' ἑαίνομεν εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ γέμοντες ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ ῥύπης, καὶ ἀποκαίνομεν καρποφόρους, &c. τ. λ. Ibid. p. 38.

§ Quoniam Vita vestra per Aquam salva facta est & fiet: fundata est enim Verbo Omnipotentis & honorifici Nominis. *Herm.* L. I. Vis. III. §. 3. p. 798. Ed. Fabric. Compare *Wall's Hist. of Inf. Bapt.* Part I. c. i. p. 2.

|| In Aquam descendimus. & accipimus Remissionem Peccatorum nostrorum, *Herm. Mandat.* IV. §. 3. p. 854.

" which Persons go down liable to *Death*, but come out of it " assign'd to *Life* *." Here it is plain, that *Baptism* is pre-supposed to *Justification*, which is made the *Effect* and *Consequent* of it. I defend not HERMAS's *Inference* or *Retrospect*, with Respect to the ancient PATRIARCHS. *Baptism* is the *Gospel-Instrument* of *Justification*: But other Symbols, and other Instruments served the same Purpose under the preceding Dispensations†.

JUSTIN, of the next Age, undertaking to describe the Order and Method of training up, and admitting new Converts to Christianity, particularly observes, that They who are persuaded, and do believe Those Things to be true which are taught Them, and do undertake to live accordingly, are directed to fast and pray for the *Forgiveness* of their former Sins; and are afterwards brought where there is *Water*, and so They are regenerated, being washed with *Water*, in the Name of the three Divine Persons; (the Necessity of which is apparent from JOHN iii. 3, 4, 5. and ISAIAH i. 16, 20.) and then They receive Remission of Sins in *Water*; but provided that They truly repent Them of their Sins‡. The Order here specified runs thus; Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Dedication to God, Renovation in CHRIST, Remission of Sins, which is Justification. The two first preceded Baptism; The Three last accompanied it, as the Fruits and Effects of it, being subsequent in Order of Causality, if not in Order of Time. Preparatory Grace, we know, must be before all; But JUSTIN had no Occasion there to be particular on That Head.

IRENÆUS, 30 or 40 Years later in the same Century, teaches, that every Son of ADAM needs the Laver of Regeneration, to relieve Him from the Transgression with which He is born§; that is, to save Him as he elsewhere explains||.

CLEMENS,

* Antequam enim accipiat Homo Nomen Filii Dei, Morti destinatus est: At ubi accipit illud Sigillum, liberatur a Morte, & traditur Vitæ. Illud autem Sigillum Aqua est, in quam descendunt Homines Morti alligati, ascendunt vero Vitæ assignati. Herm. Sim. IX. §. 16. p. 1008. Compare Wall. Part. I. c. i. p. 3, 3, 4, 5. And Bingham XI. 4, 6. p. 203, 204.

† Vid. Augustin. Enchirid. p. 241. Tom. VI.

‡ Justin Mart. Apol. I. p. 88, 89, 90. Edit. Lond. Compare Wall. Inf. Bapt. Part. I. c. ii. p. 12, 13. 2d Edit.

§ Quoniam in illa Plasmatione, quæ secundum Adam fuit, in Transgressionem factus Homo indigebat Lavacro Regenerationis; postquam linit Lutum super Oculos ejus, dixit ei, vade in Siloam, & lavare; simul & Plasmationem, & eam quæ est per Lavacrum Regenerationem restituens ei. Iren. L. V. c. xv. p. 312. Edit. Bened.

|| Omnes enim venit per semetipsum salvare: Omnes, inquam, qui per Eum renascuntur in Deum, Infantes, & Parvulos, & Pueros, & Juvenes, & Seniores, Iren. L. II. c. xxii. p. 147.

CLEMENS, of the same Time, speaking of *Baptism*, says ;
 “ Being baptized we are illuminated, being illuminated we are
 “ made Sons, being made Sons we are perfected, being per-
 “ fected we are immortalized. ——— This Work is variously
 “ denominated ; *Grace*, and *Illumination*, and *Perfection*, and
 “ *Laver* : *Laver*, by which we wipe off Sins ; *Grace*, by
 “ which The Penalties due to Sins are remitted ; *Illumination*,
 “ by which That Holy and Salutary Light is view’d, that is,
 “ by which we gaze on the Divine Being *.” *Baptism* is
 here supposed to be the *Instrument* of *Illumination*, *Remission*,
Adoption, *Perfection*, *Salvation* : Under which, jointly con-
 sidered, must be comprehended all that concerns *Justification*,
 tho’ the *Name* it self is not used.

TERTULLIAN calls *Baptism* “ The happy Sacrament of
 “ Water, where by We are washed from the Sins of our for-
 “ mer Blindness, and recovered to eternal Life †.” He adds
 that We are born in *Water*, and are no otherwise saved than by
 the abiding in it, or by the Use of it in *Baptism* ‡. He an-
 swers the Objection drawn from the Sufficiency of Faith alone,
 as in the Instance of ABRAHAM. The Sum of his Solution
 is, that what was not required formerly, is required now :
 That The Gospel has made a new Law, a new Rule for it,
 and has tied Us up to such Form. He refers to MATT.
 xxviii. 19. and to JOHN iii. 5. and to the Instance of St.
 PAUL, recorded in the Acts ; who, tho’ He had before Faith
 sufficient, yet was strictly required to add *Baptism* to it §.

From

* Βαπτίζομενοι, φωτιζόμεθα· φωτιζόμενοι, υιοποιούμεθα·
 υιοποιούμενοι, τελειούμεθα· τελειούμενοι ἀπαθανατιζόμεθα. — κα-
 λείται δὲ πᾶσα ὡς τὸ ἔργον τούτο, χάρισμα, καὶ φωτισ-
 μα καὶ τέλειον, καὶ λήρὸν· λήρὸν μὲν, δι’ ἧς τὰς ἀμαρτίας
 ἀπορρυπτόμεθα· χάρισμα δὲ, ὃ τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀμαρτήμασιν ἐπιτίμια
 εὐεχεται· φῶτισμα δὲ, δι’ ἧς τὸ ἅγιον ἐκεῖνο φῶς τὸ σωτήριον ἐποπ-
 τεύεται, τῷ τέλει δὲ ἡ τὸ θεῖον ὁρῶμεν. *Clemens Alex. Pædag.*
L. I. c. vi. p. 113. Edit. Oxon. Conf. Nazianzen. de Bapt. Orat. XL,
p. 638.

† Felix Sacramentum Aquæ nostræ, qua abluti delictis pristinae cæ-
 citatis, in Vitam æternam liberamur. *Tertullian de Bapt. c. i. p. 224.*

‡ In Aqua nascimur: nec aliter quam in Aqua permanendo Salvi
 sumus. *Ibid.* præscribitur Nemini sine Baptismo competere Salutem, ex
 illa maxime Pronuntiatione Domini, qui ait nisi natus ex Aqua, &c.
Ibid. c. xii. p. 228. Conf. de Anima, c. xl. p. 294.

§ Hic ergo scelestissimi illi provocant Quæstiones: Adeo dicunt, Bap-
 tismus non est necessarius, quibus Fides satis est; nam & Abraham nullius
 Aquæ nisi Fidei sacramento Deo placuit. Sed in omnibus posteriora con-
 cludunt.

From hence it is plain, that TERTULLIAN understood *Baptism* to be the ordinary and indispensable *Mean* or *Instrument* of *Justification*; insomuch that He thought even a *Layman* guilty of *destroying a Soul*, if He should refuse to give a Person *Baptism* in a case of *Extremity*, no *Clergy* being present *. Nevertheless, the same TERTULLIAN indulged some Particularities as to the Point of *delaying Baptism* in some Cases; and has been thought not very *consistent* with Himself in That Article; especially where He makes it an Argument for such *Delay*, that *Faith entire is secure of Salvation* †. But He hereby only *qualified* his former *Doctrine*; so as to *except* some very rare and *extraordinary* Cases, where Delays might be made, not out of *Contempt*, but *Reverence* towards the Sacrament: Otherwise the *ordinary* Rule was to stand inviolable ‡. As to the *excepted* Cases, they would be *rare* indeed, since *Baptism* might be had upon very short Warning § in any *Extremity* almost according to his Principles, if so much as a *Laic* could but be found to confer it. But I return to the Point in Hand.

CYPRIAN, more cautious in the Point of *Delays* than his Master TERTULLIAN, gives this Reason why the *Baptism* of *Infants* should not be deferred (in Danger of Death) to the *eighth Day*; that it is our duty, so far as in Us lies, to take Care, that *no Soul be destroyed* ||. It is plain from hence, that He thought there was, ordinarily, no *Justification* previous to *Baptism*, the *appointed Channel* of *Conveyance*, the Fountain Head of the *Spiritual Life*: For such was CYPRIAN'S Opinion

eludunt, & sequentia antecedentibus prevalent. Fuerit Salus retro per Fidem nudam, ante Domini Passionem & Resurrectionem. At ubi Fides aucta est, credendi in Nativitatem, Passionem, & Resurrectionem ejus, addita est Ampliatio Sacramento, Obsecratio Baptismi, Vestimentum quodammodo Fidei, quæ retrò erat nuda, nec potest [esse] jam sine sua Lega. Lex enim tingendi imposita est, & Forma præscripta. Tertull. de Bapt. c. xiii. p. 229.

* Reus erit perditus Homini, si superfederit præstare quod liberè potuit, c. xvii. p. 231.

† Si qui Pondus intelligant Baptismi, magis timebunt Consecutionem quam Dilationem: Fides integra secuta est de Salute. c. xviii. p. 232.

‡ See Wall. Hist. of Inf. Bapt. Part. I. c. iv. p. 23.

§ Bingham XI. 4. 10. p. 212.

§ Caeterum omnis dies Domini est, omnis Hora, omne Tempus habile Baptismo, c. xix. p. 232.

|| Universi judicavimus, nulli Homini nato Misericordiam Dei & Gratiâ denegandam: Nam cum Dominus in Evangelio suo dicat, *Filius Hominis non venit animas Hominum perdere, sed salvare*; quantum in nobis est, si fieri potest, nulla Anima perdenda est. Cyprian Epist. LIX. Ad Fidum, p. 98. Edit. Bened.

Opinion of it, as appears thro' all his Writings *. Not only so, but He expressly mentions *Justification* as one of the Graces conferred in it †.

I pass on to the next Century; where We find the *elder* CYRIL declaring, that a Person comes to *Baptism* bearing *His Sins, dead in Sins* (therefore not yet *justified*) but that He comes out *quickened in Righteousness* ‡; which is the same as to say, *justified*.

BASIL, of the same Century, expresses Himself fully to our Purpose, in these Words: " Whence are We CHRISTIANS? By *Faith*, will Every One say. But after what manner are We *saved*? By being *regenerated* thro' the *Grace* which is conferred in *Baptism*.—For, if *Baptism* is to Me the *Beginning* of Life, and That *Regeneration-Day* is the *first* of Days; then it is manifest That Voice is of all the most *precious* which is sounded forth upon the *Grace* of *Adoption* §. " *Baptism* is here supposed to be, as it were, the *first Delivery* of God's *Grant of Adoption*, and consequently of *Justification*, which is much the same Thing. *Faith* goes before, as the *Hand* stretched out, ready to *receive*: But it cannot be *received* before it is *given*: Neither is it ordinarily first *given* but in *Baptism*; nor *continued* afterwards but in *Virtue* of it, due *Qualifications* supposed all the while. In another Chapter The same Father says, " *Faith* and *Baptism* are two Means of Salvation, near akin to each other, and *inseparable*. For, *Faith* is *perfected* by *Baptism*, and *Bap-*
tism

* Cyprian Epist. I. p. 2. Epist. XXIII. p. 32. Ep. LXXII. p. 128. Epist. LXXIV. p. 140. Epist. LXXVI. p. 155, 157. *De Habitu Virginis*, p. 180. *Testimonium* L. III. c. xxv. p. 314. *De Orat. Dominica* p. 206.

† Quomodo Tales justificare & sanctificare baptizatos possunt, qui Hostes Sacerdotum, &c. Epist. LXXVI. p. 155.

‡ Κατέρχῃ μὲν γὰρ εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ φορῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας· ἀλλ' ἡ τῆς χάριτος ἐπίκλησις σφραγίσασα τὴν ψυχὴν ἐσυχωρεῖ λοιπὸν ὑπὸ τῷ φοβερῷ καταποθῆναι δράκοντι· νεκρὸς ἐν ἀμαρτίαις καταβάς, ἀναθαίνει ζωοποιθεὶς ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ. Cyril Hierosol., Catech. III. p. 45. Edit. Bened. Conf. Cateches. xvii. p. 282.

§ Χριστιανοὶ πόθεν ἡμεῖς; διὰ τῆς πίστεως πᾶς τις αὐ εἶποι· σωζόμεθα δέ, τίνα τρόπον; ἀναγεννηθέντες, δηλονότι, διὰ τῆς ἐν τῷ Βαπτίσματι χάριτος. — εἰ γὰρ ἀρχὴ μοι ζωῆς τὰ Βάπτισμα, καὶ πρώτη ἡμερῶν ἐκείνη ἡ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας ἡμέρα, ὅλῳ ὅτι καὶ φωνὴ τιμιωτάτη πασῶν ἡ ἐν τῇ χάριτι τῆς υἱοθεσίας ἐκφωνηθεῖσα. Basil. de Spirit. Sanct. c. x. p. 22. Edit. Bened.

"tism is grounded in Faith, and Both are compleated by the same [divine] Names *."

HILARIUS *Diaconus*, some Years before BASIL, taught the same Doctrine; interpreting St. PAUL's Quotation from the PSALMIST (which the Apostle applies to the Purpose of *Justification*, Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8,) of What is done in *Baptism*, of the *Justification* conferred in that *holy Solemnity* †: From whence it is evident, that He understood *Baptism* to be the *ordinary standing Mean*, or *Instrument of Conveyance*.

I shall shut up this Detail of *Fathers* with the Words of St. AUSTIN; who, undertaking to explain the *four Things* mentioned by the Apostle (Rom. viii. 30.) *predestinate, called, justified, and glorified*, says of the *Third*, thus: "Behold, Persons are *baptized*, all their Sins are forgiven, They are *justified* from their Sins ‡." He repeats the same Doctrine soon after in Words still more express §. It would be endless to quote Passages from the same FATHER to prove that, in his Account, there is no *Justification*, ordinarily, *before, or without Baptism*. It was a fixed Principle with Him, that *Justification* ordinarily commenced with *Baptism*, and not otherwise.

From hence (as I may note by the Way) We may easily understand what St. AUSTIN meant by his *famed Maxim*, which Many have often perverted to a very wrong Sense; namely, that

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* Πίστις δὲ καὶ βάπτισμα, δύο τρόποι τῆς σωτηρίας, συμφυεῖς ἀλλήλοις, καὶ ἀδιαίρητοι. πίστις μὲν γὰρ τελειῖται διὰ βαπτίσματος. Βάπτισμα δὲ θεμελιῖται διὰ τῆς πίστεως, καὶ διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν ὀνομάτων ἑκάτερα πληρύναι. *Basil. ibid. c. xii. p. 23.*

† Propheta autem Tempus felix prævidens in Salvatoris Adventu, beatos nuncupat, quibus sine Labore vel aliquo Opere per Lavacrum remittuntur, & teguntur, & non imputantur Peccata. Apostolus tamen propter Plenitudinem Temporum, & quia plus Gratia in Apostolis est quam fuit in Prophetis, majora protestatur quæ ex Dono Baptismatis consequimur; Quia non solum Remissionem Peccatorum accipere nos, sed justificari & Filios Dei fieri profitetur, ut Beatitudo hæc perfectam habeat & Securitatem & Gloriam. *Hilar. Diac. in Rom. iv. 8. inter Op. Ambrosij Tom. II. p. 49.*

‡ Ecce enim baptizati sunt Homines, omnia illis Peccata dimissa sunt, justificati sunt a Peccatis. *Augustin. Sermon. CLVIII. De Verb. Apostol. Rom. viii. 762. Tom. V.*

§ Unusquisque vestrum jam ipsa Justificatione constitutus, accepta scilicet Remissione Peccatorum per Lavacrum Regenerationis, accepto Spiritu Sancto, proficiens de Die in Diem, &c. *Augustin. ib. p. 763. Conf. Chrysostom in Rom. viii. 30. Hom. xv. p. 595. Tom. IX. Ed. Bened. Damascen. in eund. Loc. Op. Tom. II. p. 33.*

that good Works follow after Justification, and do not precede it *. In Reality, He meant no more than that Men must be incorporated in CHRIST, must be Christians, and good Christians (for Such only are justified) before They could practise Christian Works, or Righteousness, strictly so called † For such Works only have an eminent Right and Title to the Name of good Works; as they only are salutary within the Covenant, and have a Claim upon Promise. Works before Justification, that is, before Salutary Baptism, are not, in his Account ‡, within the Promise; but are excluded rather, according to the ordinary Rule laid down in JOHN iii. 5, and diverse other Texts before cited. But I return.

Enough hath been said to shew, that Baptism is, by Divine Appointment, the ordinary Instrument for conveying the Grace of Justification. Scripture and Antiquity are clear in this Matter: And so likewise are our Church-Forms; particularly our Baptismal § Offices, Catechism, and Confirmation.

I am aware that some eminent Moderns || have presumed to teach, that the first Justification in Adults, is antecedent to Baptism, and that Baptism rather seals and confirms it, than conveys it: But I see no sufficient Ground for That Doctrine, either in Scripture, or Antiquity, or in the public Offices of our Church; but much the contrary: And it seems, that the Mistake in this Matter first arose, either from the confounding the first preparatory Renewings of the Grace of the Spirit, with the Grace of Justification; or from a misinterpreting of St. PAUL's Doctrine relating to justifying Faith, as if the Apostle in mentioning one Instrument of Justification, had thereby excluded every Instrument besides, which He does not. It might

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* Sciat se quisque per Fidem posse justificari, etiamsi Legis Opera non praeceperint: Sequuntur enim justificatum non praecedunt justificandum. Augustin. de Fid. & Oper. c. xiv. p. 177. Tom. VI. Justificationem Opera non praecedunt. Augustin. de Spirit. & Litera, c. xxvi. 109. Tom. X. Bona Opera subsequuntur Gratiam, non praecedunt—Op. imperf. contr. Julian. L. I. c. cxli. p. 956. Tom. X. Conf. Tom. II. p. 717, 720, & Tom. VI. p. 89.

† Mandata ejus sancta & bona sibi tribuebant; quae ut possit Homo facere, Deus operatur in Homine per Fidem Jesu Christi qui Finis est ad justitiam omni Credenti: Id est, cui per Spiritum incorporatus, factusque Membrum ejus potest quisque, illo Incrementum intrinsecus dante, operari justitiam. Augustin. de Spiritu & Lit. c. xxix. p. 113. Conf. c. xxxiv. p. 119. Tom. VI.

‡ Vid. Augustin. de divers. Quaest. ad Simplic. L. I. p. 89. Tom. VI. Item, de Spirit. & Lit. c. xxxiv. p. 119. Tom. VI.

§ Publ. Bapt. of Inf. And Private Bapt. And Bapt. of Those of riper Years.

|| Bucer. Script. Anglican. p. 730.

as well be pleaded (as I before hinted) that the Apostle had thereby excluded the Work of the *Father*, or *Son*, or *Spirit* from the Office of *Justification*; as that He excluded the visible *Means*, *Rites*, or *Sacraments*, in and by which They jointly operate. St. PAUL's Phrases, or *exclusive Terms* infer no such Thing; neither is his *Faith* opposed to *Baptism*, but it takes it in, ordinarily, and is neither *salutary*, nor *lively Faith*, till *plighted in That Ordinance*.*

5. From the Instrument of *Conveyance* on God's Part, We may next proceed to the Instrument of *Reception* on Man's; which I take to be *Faith*, as I have more than once intimated, and must now explain.

I am sensible that some very eminent Men † have express'd a Dislike of the *Phrase* of the *Instrumentality* of *Faith*; and have also justly rejected the *Thing*, according to the *false* Notion which Some had conceived of it. It cannot with any tolerable Sense or Propriety be look'd upon as an Instrument of *Conveyance* in the Hand of the *efficient* or *principal Cause*; But it may justly and properly be look'd upon as the Instrument of *Reception* in the Hand of the *Recipient*. It is not the *Mean* by which the Grace is wrought, effected, or conferr'd: But it may be, and is, the *Mean* by which it is accepted, or received †: or, to express it a little differently, it is not the *Instrument* of *Justification* in the *active* Sense of the Word; but it is in the *passive* Sense of it.

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* This Article was maintained, against Cartwright, by Weigift first, and afterwards by Hooker. (See Hooker, B. V. No 60 p. 276.) Field, after Both, vindicates the Protestants on that Head, against the Reproaches of their Popish Adversaries, as follows:

" Stapleton saith, that a Threefold Fraud of the Protestants, touching
" Remission of Sins, is to be avoided: First, in that They make our
" Justification to consist in the sole Remission of Sins by Faith, that the
" Sacraments confer nothing to our Justification. But This is untrue;
" for They teach no such Thing; but that Baptism and Repentance are
" necessarily required in Them that are to be first justified. Field on
" the Church, B. III. Append. p. 298."

† Hammond, Catech. Op. Vol. I. p. 36.

Tillotson, Posth. Sermon. Vol. II. p. 480, 486.

Bull. Op. Latin. p. 418, 512, 555, 655, 657, 658.

Truman. great Propit. p. 194, 195.

† Quod per Fidem, tanquam Organum, Graviam justificationis accipi vel apprehendi dicunt Protestantes, ne isti Romanenses—nimium morosi Censores sunt, quibus ista loquendi Forma improbatur; praesertim propter Verbum apprehendi: Eodem enim Modo loquuntur etiam multi doctissimi Romanenses. Peverius in Rom. v. 2 —Maldonat. in Joh. vi. 29. videatur & Esius in Rom. iii. 28. Claudius Espencatus in 1 Tim. vi. 12. ubi horum novorum Criticorum Temeritatem recte castigat.

Gul. Forbes, confid. Modest. p. 24. Conf. p. 38. edit. nova, A. D. 1704.

It cannot be for Nothing that St. PAUL so often, and so emphatically speaks of Man's being justified by *Faith**, or through *Faith* in CHRIST's Blood†; and that He particularly notes it of ABRAHAM, that He *believed*, and that his *Faith* was *counted* to Him for *Justification*‡; when He might as easily have said, had He so meant, that Man is justified by *Faith and Works*, or that ABRAHAM, to whom the Gospel was *preached*§, was justified by *Gospel-Faith and Obedience*. Besides, it is certain, and is on all Hands allowed, that, tho' St. PAUL did not directly and expressly oppose *Faith* to *evangelical Works*, yet He comprehended the Works of the *moral Law* under those Works which He excluded from the *Office* of *justifying*, in his Sense of *Justifying*, in those Passages: And farther, He used such Arguments as appear to extend to *all Kinds of Works*: For, ABRAHAM's Works were really *evangelical Works*, and yet they were *excluded*. Add to This, that if *Justification* could come even by *evangelical Works*, without taking in *Faith* in the meritorious Sufferings and Satisfaction of a Mediator; then might we have *whereof to glory*||, as needing no Pardon; and then might it be justly said, that CHRIST *died in vain*¶. I must further own, that it is of great Weight with Me, that so early and so considerable a Writer as CLEMENS of Rome, an Apostolical Man, should so interpret the Doctrine of *justifying Faith*, as to *oppose* it plainly even to *evangelical Works* however exalted. It runs thus: "They (the ancient PATRIARCHS) were All therefore greatly glorified and magnified; not for their own Sake, or for their own Works, or for the *Righteousness* which They Themselves wrought, but thro' His good Pleasure. And we also being called thro' His good Pleasure in CHRIST JESUS, are not *justified* by Our Selves, neither by our own Wisdom, or Knowledge, or *Piety*, or the *Works* which We have done in *Holiness of Heart*, but by *That Faith* by which Almighty God *justified* All from the Beginning **." Here it

* Rom. i. 17. iii. 22, 28, 30. v. 2. ix. 32. Gal. ii. 16. iii. 8, 11, 14, 22, 24, 26. v. 5. Phil. iii. 9.

† Rom. iii. 25. Gal. ii. 20. Phil. iii. 10.

‡ Rom. iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6.

§ Gal. iii. 8.

|| See Rom. iv. 2.

¶ See Gal. ii. 21.

** Καὶ ἡμεῖς ὅν δια θελήματι αὐτοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ κληθέντες, καὶ δι' ἐαυτῶν δικαίμεθα, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας σοφίας, ἢ συνέσεως, ἢ εὐσεβείας, ἢ ἔργων ὧν κατεργασάμεθα ἐν ὁσιότητι καρτίας· ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς πίστεως, δι' ἧς πάντας τὰς ἀπ' αἰῶνος ὁ παντοκράτωρ Θεὸς ἐδικαίωσεν. Clem. Rom. Ep. i. c. 32.

It is observable, that the Word *Faith* does not stand for the whole System of Christianity, or for *Christian Belief* at large, but for some particular *self-denying* Principle by which good Men, even under the *patriarchal* and *legal* Dispensations; laid hold on the *Mercy* and *Promises* of God, referring all, not to *Themselves* or their own *Deservings*, but to *Divine Goodness*, in and thro' a *Mediator*. It is true, CLEMENS elsewhere, and St. PAUL almost every where, insists upon true *Holiness of Heart*, and *Obedience of Life*, as indispensable *Conditions* of Salvation, or *Justification*; and of That, One would think there could be no Question among Men of any Judgment or Probity: But the Question about *Conditions* is very distinct from the other Question about *Instruments*; and therefore both Parts may be true, viz. that *Faith* and *Obedience* are *equally Conditions*, and *equally indispensable* where *Opportunities* permit; and yet *Faith* over and above is emphatically the *Instrument* both of *receiving* and *holding* Justification, or a Title to Salvation*.

To explain this Matter more distinctly, let it be remembered, that God may be considered (as I before noted) either as a Party *contracting* with Man, on very *gracious* Terms †; or as a *Judge* to pronounce Judgment upon Him.

Man's first coming into Covenant (supposing Him *adult*) is by *assenting* to it, and *accepting* of it, to have and to hold it on *such Kind of Tenure* as God *proposes*: That is to say, upon a *self-denying* Tenure, considering Himself as a *guilty* Man, standing in *Need* of *Pardon*, and of *borrowed* Merits, and at

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length

* A learned Foreigner illustrates this Matter by the Case of *Marriage*, as every good Person is conceived to be married to Christ, and to become one Flesh with Him. *Ephes. v. 31, 32.* Now there are many *Qualifications*, *Conditions*, *Capacities* requisite to a *valid* Marriage: But still *Consent*, or *Contract*, with due Solemnities, is what formally *makes* the matrimonial Bond, and what gives it its Sanction. Respect, Obedience, Love, do not properly *effect* it; but *Consent* does. So *Faith* binds the Contract, consummates the Marriage-Covenant with Christ, while the rest are consider'd as *Qualifications*, or *Conditions* of the Stipulation, not as the formal Stipulation itself. Vid. *Wesseli Dissertat. Academ. p. 147, &c. 281.*

† Neque enim Hoc Foedus Naturam habet Emptionis, Venditionis, aut Locationis, Conductionis, aut alicujus Contractus innominati, do ut facias, facio ut facias, ubi eorum quæ invicem præstantur æqualitas requiritur: Sed habet aliquam convenientiam cum contractu feudali, ubi una Pars ex Gratia Quid in alterum confert, quæ autem altera vicissim præstat, non Retributionis sed tantum Recognitionis Vim habent, grati, fidelis, ac devoti Animi Testem. *Pufendorf, Jus Feudal. Divin. §. 54. p. 191. Conf. §. 51. p. 172.*

length resting upon *Mercy**. So here, the *previous* Question is, whether a Person shall *consent* to hold a Privilege upon this *submissive* Kind of Tenure, or not? Such *Assent* or *Consent*, if He comes into it, is the *very Thing* which St. PAUL and St. CLEMENS call *Faith*: † And This *previous* and *general* Question, is the Question which Both of Them determine against any *proud Claimants* Who would hold by a more *self-admiring* Tenure.

Or, if We next consider God as sitting in Judgment, and Man before the Tribunal, going to plead his Cause; here the Question is, what *Kind of Plea* shall a Man resolve to trust his Salvation upon? Shall He stand upon his *Innocence*, and rest upon *strict Law*; or shall He plead *guilty*, and rest in an *Act of Grace*? If He chuses the *Former*, He is proud, and sure to be *cast*: If He chuses the *Latter*, He is *safe* so far, in throwing Himself upon an *Act of Grace*. Now, This Question also, which St. PAUL has decided, is *previous* to the Question, what *Conditions* even the *Act of Grace* it self finally insists upon? A Question which St. JAMES in particular, and the *general* Tenour of the whole Scripture has abundantly satisfied; and which could never have been made a *Question* by any considerate, or impartial CHRISTIAN. But of that I may say more under another Article. What I am at present concern'd with, is to observe, that *Faith* is emphatically the *Instrument* by which an Adult *accepts* the Covenant of Grace, *consenting* to hold by *that Kind of Tenure*, to be *justified* in *that Way*, and to rest in *that Kind of Plea*, putting his *Salvation* on *that only Issue*.

It appears to be a just Observation, which Dr. WHITBY makes (Pref. to the Epist. to Galat. p. 300.) that ABRAHAM had *Faith* (*Hebr. xi. 8.*) before what was said of his *Justification* in *Gen. xv. 16*; and afterwards more abundantly, when He

* Summa huc redit, quod is [Christus] Peccata Generis Humani, in se suscepit, eaque expiavit, ac pro iisdem iustitiae Divinae satisfecit, eo cum Effectu ut Qui in ipsum credunt, seu in ejusdem Merito & Satisfactione omnem suam Fiduciam reponunt, ejus intuitu Gratiam Dei quaerunt, Peccatorum Remissionem, *solidam* & coram Tribunali divino subsistentem *Iustitiam*, cum aliis Beneficiis quae cum Deo reconciliatos comitantur, & demum *Vitam aeternam* consequantur. Pufendorf, *Ibid.* § 48. p. 166.

† Quia Foedus ac Divina Beneficia per eandem [Fidem] acceptantur; cum invitis & reluctantis ista impingere nolit Deus, neque id citra Extinctionem *Moralitatis* fieri possit. *Ibid.* §. 51. p. 172. Ex Parte Hominum ordinavit Medium *ληπίλον*, seu per quod istud acceptatur, *Fidem*; quam etiam Hominibus offert, sed *moralis*, non *physico* aut *mechanico* Modo. *Ibid.* §. 78. p. 319. Conf. §. 85. p. 349.

He offer'd up his Son ISAAC; but yet neither of those Instances was pitch'd upon by the Apostle, as fit for his Purpose, because in Both *Obedience* was join'd with *Faith*: Whereas here was a pure *Act of Faith* without *Works*, and of This *Act of Faith* it is said, *it was imputed to Him for Righteousness*.

The Sum is, none of our *Works* are good enough to stand by *Themselves* before Him, who is of *purer Eyes* than to behold Iniquity. CHRIST only is *pure* enough for it at first Hand, and They that are CHRIST's at second Hand, in and thro' Him. Now, because it is by *Faith* that We thus interpose, as it were, CHRIST between God and Us, in Order to gain *Acceptance* by Him; therefore *Faith* is emphatically the *Instrument* whereby we receive the Grant of *Justification*. *Obedience* is equally a *Condition*, or *Qualification*, but not an *Instrument*, not being that *Act* of the *Mind* whereby we look up to GOD and CHRIST, and whereby we embrace the Promises.

Faith, by St. PAUL's Account of it, is *The Substance of Things hoped for*, as making the Things *subsist*, as it were, with certain Effect, in the Mind. It is the *Evidence of Things not seen**, being, as it were, the Eye of the Mind, looking to the Blood of CHRIST, and thereby inwardly warming the Affections to a firm Reliance upon it, and Acquiescence in it. † But This is to be understood of a *firm and vigorous Faith*, and at the same time *well grounded*.—*Faith* is said to embrace (salute, welcome) the Things *promised* of God ‡, as Things *present* to View, or near at Hand. There is no other Faculty, Virtue, Act, or Exercise of the Mind, which so properly does it, as *Faith* does: Therefore *Faith* particularly is represented as That by which the *Gentile Converts laid hold on Justification*§, and brought it home to Themselves. And as *Faith* is said to have *healed* Several ||, in a *Bodily Sense*; so may it be also said to *heal* Men in a *Spiritual Way*, that is, to *justify*, being immediately *instrumental* in the *Reception* of That Grace, more than any other *Virtues* are. For as, when Persons were *healed* by looking on the *Brazen Serpent* ¶, their *Eyes* were particularly *instrumental* to their *Cure*, more than the *whole Body*; so *Faith*, the *Eye* of the Mind, is particularly *instrumental* in this *Affair*, more than the *whole Body* of Graces, with which

C c 4

it

* Hebr. xi. 1.

† Rom. iii. 25.

‡ Hebr. xi. 13, 14.

§ Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32.

|| Matt. ix. 22. Luke vii. 50. viii. 48. xvii. 19. xviii. 42. Mark v. 34. x. 52.

¶ Numb. xxi. 8, 9. Comp. Isa. xlv. 22. Joh. iii. 14. Conf. Gul. Forbes, Confid. Modest. p. 28, 29. Grabe in Notis ad Bulli Haymon. p. 450, 451.

it is accompanied : Not for any super-eminent Excellency of *Faith* above every other Virtue (for *Charity* is greater *) but for its particular *Aptness*, in the very *Nature* of it, to make Things *distant* become *near*, and to admit them into close Embraces. The *Homilies* of our Church describe and limit the Doctrine thus : “ *Faith* doth not shut out *Repentance*, *Hope*, “ *Love*, *Dread*, and the *Fear* of God to be joined with *Faith* “ in every Man that is *justified*; but it shutteth them out from “ the *Office* of justifying †;” that is to say, from the *Office* of accepting or receiving it: For, as to the *Office* of justifying in the active Sense, That belongs to God only, as the same *Homily* elsewhere declares ‡. The Doctrine is there further explained thus : “ Because *Faith* doth directly send us to CHRIST “ for Remission of our Sins, and that by *Faith* given us of God “ we embrace the Promise of God’s Mercy, and of the Remission of our Sins (which Thing none other of our Virtues or “ Works properly doth) therefore the Scripture useth to say, “ that *Faith* without Works doth justify §:” Not that This is to be understood of a Man’s being confident of his own Election, his own Justification, or his own Salvation in particular (which is quite another Question, and to be determin’d by other Rules) but of his confiding solely upon the Covenant of Grace in CHRIST (not upon his own Deservings) with full Assurance

* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

† Homily of Salvation, Part I. p. 22.

‡ Homily of Salvation, Part II. p. 25, 26. and Part III. p. 28. Among the later Homilies, see on the Passion, p. 452, 454. And concerning the Sacrament, Part I. p. 472, 574. Conf. Norwoll’s Catech. p. 41. Gul. Forbes, Confid. Modest. p. 23, 24, 38. Hooker, Disc. on Justific. p. 509. Tyndal 45, 187, 223, 330, 331. Field, 298, 323. Conf. Augustan, Art. XX. p. 18, 19. Spanheim, Tom. III. p. 141, 159, 761, 834. Le Blanc, p. 126, 267.

§ Homily of Salvation, Part III. p. 28.

N. B. In the 28th Article of our Church, we are taught, that THE MEAN whereby the Body of Christ is RECEIVED and eaten in the Supper, is FAITH. Comp. Jewell’s Defence, &c. p. 234. And my Review, p. 141, 142, 195, 212, 241, 244, 539. No One can doubt but that *Charity* is as necessarily requir’d to a worthy Reception of the *Eucharist*, or to a real Reception of the Body and the Graces thereon depending, as *Faith* can be: They are Both of them equally Conditions: But *Faith* particularly is the Mean, or Instrument; which *Charity* in this Case is not. *Charity* is excluded here from serving as a Mean, from the Office of being an Instrument, and no body takes Offence at it: Why should they therefore in the other Sacrament, the Sacrament of the first Justification, when the Cases are parallel? Our Church is constant and uniform in Both; and so are the ancient Churches likewise, upon Reasons grounded in the very Nature of *Faith*, as an Act or Habit specifically different from *Charity*.

Assurance that so, and so only, He is safe as long as He behaves accordingly.

The Covenant of Grace has Conditions annex'd to it, which I am next to consider.

6. The Conditions of Justification are of great Weight; for, without Them, no Instruments can avail. Those Conditions are Faith and Obedience; as St. JAMES hath particularly maintain'd.* St. PAUL had before determin'd the general and previous Question, as to the Tenure whereby We are to hold, or the Plea by which We ought to abide; namely, by Grace, in Opposition to Claims: And when some Libertines had perverted (as is probable) St. PAUL's Doctrine very widely and strangely, and made an ill Use of it; then St. JAMES shewed that That very Faith, which was to rest in a Covenant of Grace, supposed a Conformity to the Terms of it; otherwise it would be found but a Dead Faith, no Christian Faith at all: For, a Cordial Belief of the divine Promises, and a Cordial Acquiescence in God's Covenant, implies and includes a Cordial Submission to the Terms and Conditions of it; otherwise, it is Nothing but empty Ceremony.

Upon the Whole, the perfect Agreement between St. PAUL and St. JAMES, in the Article of Justification, appears very clear, and certain. St. PAUL declares, that, in Order to come at Justification, it is necessary to stand upon Grace, not upon Merit; which St. JAMES does not deny, but confirms rather in what He says of the perfect Law of Liberty, Jam. i. 25. ii. 12. St. PAUL makes Faith the Instrument of receiving That Grace; which St. JAMES does not dispute, but approves by what He says of ABRAHAM, (ii. 23.) only He maintains also, that, in the conditionate Sense, Justification depends equally upon Faith and good Works; which St. PAUL also teaches and inculcates in Effect, or in other Words, thro' all his Writings. If St. PAUL had had precisely the same Question before Him which St. JAMES happen'd to have, He would have decided just as St. JAMES did: And if St. JAMES had had precisely the same Question before Him which St. PAUL had, He would have determin'd just as St. PAUL did. Their Principles were exactly the same, but the Questions were diverse, and They had different Adversaries to deal with, and opposite Extremes to encounter, which is a common Case.

It may be noted, that That Faith which I here call a Condition, is of much wider Compass than That particular Kind of Faith which is precisely the Instrument of Justification. For,
Faith,

Faith, as a *Condition*, means the whole Complex of *Christian Belief* as express'd in the *Creeds*; while *Faith*, as an *Instrument*, means only the laying hold on *Grace*, and resting in *CHRIST's Merits*, in Opposition to our own *Deservings*: Tho' This also, if it is a *vital* and *operative* Principle (and if it is not, it is nothing worth) must of course *presuppose*, carry with it, and draw after it an hearty *Submission* to, and *Observance* of, all the necessary *Conditions* of that *Covenant of Grace*, wherein We repose our whole Trust and Confidence. So that St. PAUL might well say, *Do We then make void the Law* (the Moral Law) *thro' Faith?* *God forbid: Yea we establish the Law* *. We exempt no Man from religious *Duties*; which are *Duties* still, tho' they do not *merit*, nor are practicable to such a Degree as to be above the Need of *Pardon*: They are necessary *Conditions*, in their Measure, of *Justification*; tho' not *sufficient* in themselves to *justify*, nor *perfect* enough to stand before God, or to abide Trial: Therefore *CHRIST's Merits* must be taken in to *supply* their Defects; and so our resting in *CHRIST's Attonement*, by an humble, self-denying *Faith*, is our last Resort, our Anchor of Salvation both sure and steadfast, after we have otherwise done our utmost towards the fulfilling God's Sacred Laws, towards the performing all the *Conditions* required †.

That *good Works*, *internal* and *external*, are according as *Opportunities* offer, and *Circumstances* permit, *Conditions* properly so called, is clear from the whole Tenour of *Scripture*, as hath been often and abundantly proved by our own *Divines* ‡, and is admitted by the most judicious among the *foreign Reformed* §.

Yet

* Rom. iii. 31. See Norris Pract. Disc. Vol. III. Disc. 3.

† Coram Deo Nihil valet quam *Filius* ejus charissimus, *Jesus Christus*: Ad illum ubicunque est, respicit; in illo complacuit: Hic totus sanctus & purus est coram illo. *Filius* autem non per *Opera*, sed per *Fidem* in corde absque omni Opere, apprehenditur. *Charitas* & *Opera* nec sunt nec esse possunt *Filius Dei*, aut *justitia* quæ coram Deo pura & sancta sit, ut est *Filius*. Itaque per se non consistunt coram Deo ut *justitia pura*, qualis est *Filius*. Quod vero *justa* & *sancta* vocentur, ex *Gratia* sit, non ex *jure*: Neque illa æque respicit Deus ut *Filium*, sed tantum propter *Filium* ea tolerat, & fert illorum Impuritatem: imo coronat ea & Præmiis afficit, sed id omne propter *Filium*, qui in Corde habitat per *Fidem*. Luther. in Seckendorf. Lib. III. p. 357. A. D. 1541.

‡ Bull. Op. Latin. p. 412, 414, 415, 430, 434, 514, 516, 544, 583, 645, 668. Edit. ult.

§ *Stillinger's Works*, Vol. III. p. 367, 380, 393, 398. *Tillotson Posth. Serm.* Vol. II. p. 484, 487.

§ *Vossius de Bonis Operibus*, Thes. x. p. 370. Op. Tom. VI. *Frid. Spanhem. fil.* Op. Tom. III. p. 141, 159.

Conf. Gul. Forbes, Confid. Modest. p. 195, &c.

Yet Some have been very scrupulous as to this innocent Name, even while They allow the *absolute Necessity* of good Works, as indispensable *Qualifications* for future Blessedness. Why not *Conditions* therefore, as well as *Qualifications*? Perhaps, Because That Name might appear to strike at *absolute Predestination*, or *unconditional Election*; and there may lie the Scruple: Otherwise, the Difference appears to lie rather in *Words* than in *Things*.

Some will have them called not *Conditions*, but *Fruits* or *Consequents* of Justification. If they mean, by *Justification*, the same as the *Grace* of the Holy Spirit, and the *first Grace* of Faith springing from it; they say true*: and then there is nothing more in it than an *improper Use* of the Word *Justification*, excepting that from *Abuse of Words* very frequently arises some Corruption of *Doctrine*.

If They mean only, that *outward Acts* of Righteousness are *Fruits* of *inward Habits* or *Dispositions*; That also is undoubtedly true: But That is no Reason why *internal Acts*, *Virtues*, *Graces* (*good Works* of the *Mind*) should not be called *Conditions* of the *Primary Justification*; or why the *outward Acts* should not be justly thought *Conditions* of *preserving* it.

But if They mean that *Justification* is ordinarily given to *Adults*, without any preparative or previous *Conditions* of *Faith* and *Repentance*, That indeed is a very new *Doctrine* and dangerous, and opens a wide Door to carnal *Security*, and to all *Ungodliness*. But enough of This Matter.

The Sum of what has been offered under the present Head is, That we are *justified* by God the *Father*, consider'd as *Principal*, and *first Mover*; and by God the *Son*, as *meritorious Purchaser*; and by God the *Holy-Ghost*, as immediate *Efficient*; and by *Baptism*, as the ordinary *Instrument* of *Conveyance*; and by *Faith* of such a Kind, as the ordinary *Instrument* of *Reception*; and lastly, by *Faith* and *Holiness*, as the necessary

* Nemo computet bona Opera ante Fidem; ubi Fides non erat, bonum Opus non erat: Bonum enim Opus Intentio facit, intentionem Fides dirigit. *Augustin.* in Psal. xxxi. p. 172. Tom. IV.

Crede in Eum qui justificat Impium, ut possint & bona opera tua esse opera bona: Nam nec bona illa appellaverim, quamdiu non de Radice bona procedunt. *Ibid.* p. 174.

N. B. St. *Augustin* is not constant in his Notion of *good Works*, but He uses the Phrase in a twofold Sense, *larger* or *stricter*. Sometimes He means by *good Works*, Works flowing from *Grace* and *Faith* whether before or after *Baptism*; as He does here: And sometimes He means Works strictly *christian*, subsequent to the *Incorporation* in *Baptism*, that is, subsequent to *Justification*. The Want of observing this his twofold Use of the Phrase, has led some uncautious Readers into Mistakes.

sary Qualifications and Conditions in Adults, both for the first receiving, and for the perpetual preserving it *. Such, and so many are the *concurring Causes*, operating, in their Order and Degree, towards Man's *first, or final Justification*. It would be altogether wrong to *separate* them, or to set them *one against another*, or to *advance any one, or more*, to the *Exclusion of the rest*.

I may observe further, for the preventing any Mistake or Misconception, that I might have consider'd *Baptism* as an *external Instrument of Reception*, in the Hand of *Man*, as *Man* bears a Part in that Sacrament; and so there would be *two Instruments of Reception*, external and internal, *Baptism* and *Faith* :

* The Order of *Justification* is thus expressed in *K. Edward's Catechism*, written by *Peynet*, A. D. 1353, countenanced by the other *Bishops and Clergy*, and published by the *King's Authority*.

" 1. The *first and principal*, and most proper Cause of our *Justification and Salvation*, is the Goodness and Love of God, whereby He chose us before the World.

" 2. After That, God granteth us to be called by the preaching of the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*; when the *Spirit* of the Lord is poured upon us: By whose Guiding and Governance we be led to settle our *Trust* in God, and *hope* for the Performance of his Promise.

" 3. With this *Choice* is joined, as Companion, the mortifying of the *Old Man*, that is, of our Affections and Lusts.

" 4. From the same *Spirit* also cometh our *Sanctification*, the Love of God and of our Neighbour; Justice and Uprightness of Life.

" 5. Finally, to say all in Sum, whatever is in us, or may be done of us, honest, pure, true, and good; That altogether springeth out of this pleasant Rock. The Goodness, Love, Choice, and unchangeable Purpose of God, He is the Cause; the rest are the *Fruits and Effects*.

" 6. Yet are also the *Choice* and *Spirit* of God and *Christ* Himself Causes conjoined and coupled with each other: which may be reckoned amongst the *principal Causes* of Salvation.

" 7. As oft therefore as we use to say, that we are made *righteous* and saved by *Faith only*, it is meant thereby, that *Faith*, or rather *Trust* alone doth lay hard upon, understand, and perceive our *righteous-making* to be given us of God *freely*; That is to say, by no *Deserts* of our own, but by the *Free Grace* of the Almighty Father.

" 8. Moreover *Faith* doth ingender in us Love of our Neighbour, and such *Works* as God is pleased withal: For, if it be a *lively* and true *Faith*, quickned by the Holy Ghost, She is the Mother of all good saying and doing. By This short Tale, it is evident by what Means we attain to be righteous. For, not by the *Worthiness* of our own Deservings were we heretofore chosen, or long ago saved, but by the only *Mercy* of God, and pure *Grace* of *Christ* our Lord; whereby we were in Him made to do those good *Works* that God had appointed for us to walk in. And altho' good *Works* cannot deserve to make us righteous before God, yet do they cleave unto *Faith*, that neither *Faith* can be found without them, nor good *Works* be any where found without *Faith*." Fol. 68. in *Heylin* *Quinquartie*. Contr. p. 105.

† For bold.

Faith: And if any one chuses so to state the Case, I shall not object to it. But having mention'd *Baptism* before, as the *Instrument of Conveyance* on God's Part, which is most considerable, I thought it of less Moment to bring it up again under a different View, because That would be understood of Course.

I cannot dismiss this Head without throwing in a Word or two of the wise Provisions made by our Church, in bringing *Children* to *Baptism*, that They may be both *regenerated* and *justified* from the first. It is right and safe for the Children Themselves: And not only so; but the very doing it is further of Use to prevent, or remove the Perplexities raised by contentious Men on the Subject of *Justification*.

Some will tell you that *good Works* are not *Conditions* of *Justification*: It is certainly true in the Case of *Infants* (which is the common Case with us) for neither *Works*, nor *Faith*, are *Conditions* required of Them: They are *justified* without either, by the *free Mercy* of God, thro' the alone *Merits* of CHRIST.

Some will plead, that Man is utterly *unable* to do *good Works* before He is *justified* and *regenerated*: They should rather say, before He receives *Grace*; for That is the real, and the full Truth. But what Occasion or Need is there, for disturbing common Christians at all with Points of this Nature now? Are we not All of Us, or nearly All, (Ten thousand to One) *baptized* in *Infancy*; and therefore *regenerated* and *justified* of Course, and thereby prepared for *good Works*, as soon as capable of them by our Years? *Good Works* must, in this Case at least (which is *our Case*) follow after *Justification* and *Regeneration*, if they are at all: And therefore how impertinent and frivolous is it, if not hurtful rather, to amuse the Ignorant with such Notions, which, in our Circumstances, may much better be spared? Our Church has so well provided for that Case, by *Infant Baptism*, that We need not so much as enquire whether good Works *precede*, or *follow* *Justification* in the Case of *Adults*, since it is not our Case. We are very sure that, in *our Circumstances*, *good Works* do not *precede*, but *follow* *Justification*, because they come after *Baptism*, if they come at all. The Truth, and the whole Truth of this Matter seems to lie in the following Particulars.

1. *Infants* are *justified* in *Baptism*, without either *Faith*, or *Works*; and, if They grow up in *Faith* and *Obedience*, the Privilege is *continued* to Them: If not, it is *taken away* from Them, till They *repent*.

2. *Adults*, coming *fitly prepared*, are immediately *justified* in *Baptism*, by *Faith*, without any *outward Works*, without a
good

good Life, while They have not Time for it; But if a *good Life* does not ensue afterwards, when Time and Opportunities are given; They forfeit the Privilege received, till They repent.

3. *Adults*, coming to Baptism in *Hypocrisy* or *Impenitency* (like *SIMON MAGUS*) are not justified, whatever their Faith be; because They want the necessary and essential Qualifications, or Conditions: But, if They afterwards turn to God with true Faith and Repentance; then They enter into a justified State, and so continue all along, unless They relapse.

4. Neither Faith nor Works are required in *Infants*: Both Faith and inward Works (a Change of Heart) are required in All Adults: Faith and Works (inward and outward) are indispensably required in all Adults who survive their Baptism, in Proportion to their Opportunities, Capacities, or Abilities. But enough of This.

V.

Having hitherto endeavour'd to explain the Nature, and to set forth the Causes and Instruments of Justification, in as clear a Manner as I could; I proceed now, lastly, to point out some Extremes, which Many have been found to run into, on the right Hand, or on the left: So hard a Thing is it to observe a middle Course, and to pursue the safe and even Road. Those Extremes or Deviations are many, but are reducible to two; one of which, for distinction sake, I may call the Proud Extreme, as disdaining to accept the Grace of God, or the Merits of CHRIST; the other may be called the Libertine Extreme, as abusing the Doctrines of Grace and Satisfaction, to serve the Ends of Licentiousness.

1. I shall begin with the Proud Extreme. The Pagans, formerly, were so proud of their good Morals, that They conceived They had no Need of CHRIST, either to make Them better, or to secure the Divine Acceptance; and therefore They would not so much as listen to the Terms of Christianity*.

The Pharisaical Jews were as proud, or prouder, in their Way, claiming, as it were, Justification as a Debt†, rather than

* Multi enim gloriuntur de Operibus, & inveniunt multos Paganos propterea nolle fieri Christianos, quia quasi sufficiunt sibi de bona Vita sua. Bene vivere Opus est, ait: Quid mihi præcepturus est Christus? Ut bene vivam? jam bene vivo: Quid mihi necessarius est Christus? Nullum Homicidium, nullum Furtum, nullam Rapinam facio, Res alienas non concupisco, nullo Adulterio contaminor: Nam inveniatur aliquid in Vita mea quod reprehendatur, & Qui reprehenderit, faciat Christianum. Augustin. in Psal. xxx. Epist. ii. p. 171. Tom. IV.

† Rom. iv. 4. xi. 6. Compare Truman. Great Propitiation, p. 184, 300.

than a *Favour*, as if They had no need of *Grace*, or were too exalted to accept of *Pardon*. This high Conceit of Themselves and their own Perfections, made Them averse to CHRIST, and kept Them from submitting to the *Gospel-Way* of *Justification*, or *Salvation*.

The *Pelagians*, of the fifth Century, by over-magnifying *Free-will* and *natural Abilities*, at the same Time depreciating, or slighting *Divine Grace*, unwarily fell into the *Proud Extreme*; tho' not so grievously as the *Jews* and *Pagans* had done before. St. AUSTIN, however, very justly made Use of the same Way of Reasoning against Them, which St. PAUL had made Use of against *Jews* and *Pagans*; because the same *general Reasons* concluded equally against All*.

The *Schoolmen* of later Days, and the *Romanists* still later, one by setting up a Kind of *Merit of Congruity* † as to Works preceding Justification, and the other by maintaining a *Merit of Condignity* ‡ with respect to Works following, and by admitting *Works of Supererogation* §, have apparently run too far into the *Proud Extreme*; only differently modified, or under a *Form*, somewhat different from That of the self-assuming Claimants of older Times. Wherefore the First Reformers, finding that the same *general Reasons*, which St. PAUL had made Use of in another Case, might be justly applicable in this Case also; They laid hold of them, and urged them with irresistible Force, against all Kinds of human *Merit*, or pretended *Merit*, however disguised, or however set off with Art, or Subtilty. Thus came the Doctrine of Justification by *Faith alone* ||, that is to say, by the *alone Merits* and *Cross* of CHRIST

* Hoc possumus dicere quod de Lege dicit Apostolus, si per Naturam Justitia, ergo Christus gratis mortuus est.—Qui suis Meritis Praemia tamquam debita expectant, nec ipsa Merita Dei Gratia tribuunt, sed viribus propriae voluntatis, sicut dictum est de carnali Israel, persequentes Legem Justitia, in Legem Justitia non perveniunt. Quare? Quia non ex Fide, sed tamquam ex Operibus. Rom. ix. 31, 32. Ipsa est enim Justitia ex Fide, quam Gentes apprehenderunt, de quibus dictum est. Rom. ix. 30.—Ipsa est Justitia ex Fide, qua credimus nos justificari, hoc est, justos fieri, Gratia Dei per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum.—Quae ex Deo Justitia in Fide, in Fide utique est, qua credimus nobis Justitiam Divinitus dari, non a Nobis, in Nobis, nostris Viribus fieri. Augustin. Paulino Epist. CLXXXVI. p. 664, 666. Tom. II.

† Against *Merit of Congruity*, See the XIIIth Article of our Church.

‡ Concil. Trident. Sess. VI. Can. 32. Bellarmin. de Justificat. L. V. c. 17.

§ Against which, See the XIVth Article of our Church.

|| See the XIth Article of our Church.

CHRIST (as Bishop JEWEL interprets it*) to be a distinguishing Principle of the Reformation.

The Socinians, by rejecting CHRIST's Satisfaction, and of Course standing upon their own Works as available to Salvation, independent of it, have only chosen another Way of committing the same Fault, and of running into the Proud Extreme.

The Deists, who boast of Their Morality †, in Opposition to Gospel-Faith and Gospel-Obedience, are, in this Respect, so nearly allied to the Pagan Philosophers Who lived in Christian Times, that They may be said to fall under the same Predicament with Them; excepting only the additional Aggravation of Their Apostasy from the Faith whereunto They had been baptized.

Those Enthusiasts, Who fear not to boast even of a sinless Perfection in this Life; They, (whatever Their Pretences are) are remarkably peccant in the Proud Extreme, even to a Degree of Madness, and stand condemn'd by many express Passages, both of Old Testament and New.

Lastly, If there be any amongst Us, as probably there may, who, tho' knowing Themselves to be Sinners, yet think that the good Works of Alms, or other the like bounden Duties, will satisfy for their Sins; and who thereupon conceive that God would do Them Wrong, if He should not, for Their good Deeds, pardon Their evil Deeds; Such also may be said to err in the Proud Extreme, not considering that all Their good Deeds are only so many strict Dues, and that the paying off a Debt in Part entitles no Man to a Discharge for the Remainder. God, for CHRIST's Sake ‡, may give a Discharge for the whole, to every

* Jewel, Def. of Apology, p. 66.

† Their main Principle is thus expressed in a Latin Distich.

Haud erucient Animum quæ circa Religionem
Vexantur Lites; Sit modo Vita proba.

Buro. Herbert. See my Discourse on Fundamentals, p. 57, 58, 59.

Near akin to These, are Such as magnify moral Virtues, Pagan Virtues, as acceptable in themselves, and needing no Atonement, nor Sacrament, to recommend them to the Divine Acceptance. See The Nature, Obligation, and Efficacy of the Christian Sacraments, p. 56, 57, 65. And Supplement, p. 40, 41, &c. 52, 53, 54.

‡ Non patitur enim justum Dei Judicium, ut justum censeat Aliquem qui justitiam non habeat: Non habet vero justitiam ullam Peccator nisi in Christo, & per mysticam arctissimamque illam Unionem cum Christo. Jerem. xxiii. 6.—2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Cor. i. 30. Quæque ideo tantopere inculceatur in N. T. ubi Fideles sexcentis in Locis dicuntur esse in Christo. Et celebratur pariter in V. T. in Psal. xlv. Cantico Canticorum toto. Isa. liv. 5. Hos. ii. 18, 19. Quia scilicet in ea est Fundamentum Justificationis

every penitent Offender, after His sincerely performing *some Part of His Duty*: But a Man's own good *Works*, be they ever so many, or so great, cannot in themselves be pleaded by Way of proper *Atonement* for His Sins.

Having thus briefly enumerated the most, or the most common *Mistakes* or *Miscarriages* in the Matter of *Justification*, on the *assuming* Side, derogating from the Honour of God's *free Grace*, and from the *Merits* of CHRIST, which are the valuable *Consideration* upon which, or for the sake of which only, God *justifies* as many as He does justify; I shall now proceed to observe something of the common *Mistakes* in the other *Extreme*, which concerns the necessary, essential *Conditions*, or *Qualifications* required in every *Adult* whom God shall accept.

2. It is a dangerous and fatal *Extreme* so to magnify, or to pretend to magnify *Grace*, or *Faith*, as thereby to *exclude*, *sink*, or any Way *lessen* the *Necessity* of true and sincere, and (so far as Human Infirmities permit) universal *Obedience* *. There is the greater Need of the utmost Caution and Circumspection in this Particular, because corrupt Nature is very prone to listen to, and to fall in with any appearing Arguments, any Pretexts, Colours, Handles for *Relaxation of Duty*, and for *reconciling* Their *Hopes* and Their *Lusts* together. St. PAUL was aware, that Some of ill Minds might be

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ianis Peccatoris coram Deo. Vinculum vero hujus *Unionis* præcipuum, absque quo *Unio* hæc nullatenus consistit, est *Fides* actualis in Christum, moriturum olim, nunc mortuum, in Adultis; vel *Spiritus Fidei* in Infantibus electis. *Wesselius*, Dissert. Academ. p. 143. Tum tandem *justificari* Peccatorem coram Deo *sola Fide*, qua *dextram* dat Sponsio ac Sponsori, ejusque *dextram* tenet, & qua *sola connubium stabile* cum ipso contrahens, *Justitia vicaria* ejus imputatur illi ut *sua*, & Jus accipit ad omnia ejus Bona.—Bona Opera postea imponuntur *justificati* (*Reginæ*) ut in quibus non est *Causa* regnandi, sed *Via* tantum ad Regnum *Gloriæ*. Omnes ergo externe *vocati* (quibus *Rex* *Messias* Sponsor *Fœderis*, cum *Justitia vicaria*, omnique *Gratia* ejus quotidie offertur in *Evangelio*, Quibusque ipse *dextram suam conjugalem* blande porrigit) semetipsos diligenter & serio examinare debent, num huius *Reginæ*, seu *Ecclesiæ* veræ, ut ejus *Membra* genuina, accenseri queant. *Ibid.* p. 281.

* *Signa Fidei* justificantis sunt, 1. *Totum velle Christum suum esse*, non tantum ut *Sacerdotem*, sed etiam ut *Regem*. 2. *Solum velle Christum*, cum Abnegatione *Justitiæ propriæ*, omniumque *Sanctorum*, quæ nulla est. 3. *Gaudere in Fide*, & animosa in adversis *Fiducia* stare ad *Dextram Regis*, eique adhaerere, etiam dum ducit per *Ignes* & *Aquas*. 4. *Abnegare* *Voluntatem propriam* quandoque *naturalem*, semper *pravam* ac *perversam*, & *Regis voluntati* arcanæ & revelatæ se patienter ac prompte submittere. Si Horum nihil in semetipsis deprehendant, hoc ipso Momento, absque ulla dilatione, *Fide sincera* *Fœdus conjugale* contrahant, &c.—Si vero horum aliquid in se ipsis inveniant *Gravias* immortales agant—*Stent* porro in *Fide animosi*, &c. p. 281, 282.

apt to pervert His sound Doctrine of *Justification by Faith*, to the Purposes of *Licentiousness*; But *Truth* was not to be suppress'd for Fear Some should *abuse* it (For what is there which Some or Other may not make an ill Use of?) Neither would it have been right to let *one Extreme* go *uncorrected*, only for the preventing the possible, or even probable Danger from weak, or evil-minded Men, Who might take the Handle to run into *another*. St. PAUL therefore was content so to correct an Error on the right Hand, as, at the same Time, to guard against a greater on the left*.

Notwithstanding all his *Guards*, Some there were (as He supposed there would be) who even in the *Apostolical Age* did *pervert* the Doctrine of *Grace*, to serve the Ends of *Licentiousness*: And Some or Other, probably, have done the like, designedly or undesignedly, in every Age since. St. PAUL had taught, that none of our *Works* are *pure*, or *perfect* enough to abide the *Divine Scrutiny*, or to *claim* Justification as a Debt†, or a Matter of *Right*; which is undoubtedly true: But *Libertines* changed that *true* and *sound* Proposition into this very *unsound* one; that *good Works* are not so much as necessary *Conditions* or *Qualifications* for *Justification*. St. PAUL had also taught, that *Faith*, or an humble *Reliance* upon the *Grace* of God thro' the *Merits* of CHRIST, in Opposition to *Self-boasting* ‡, or standing upon the *Perfection* of our own *Performances*, was our only *safe Plea* before God, our only *sure Way* to be *justified*, after doing the best We could for performing our bounden Duties: This *true* and *important* Proposition Some turn'd into quite another, *contradictory* to the whole Tenour of the *Gospel*; Viz. That *Faith alone*, a *dead Faith*, separate from evangelical *Obedience*, is the *only Condition* of *Salvation*. Against such *Dogmatizers*, and against such *loose Principles* St. JAMES engaged, reproving and confuting the Men and their Errors in few, but very strong Words §. St. PETER also and St. JOHN, tho' more obscurely, combated the same Error ||.

That Some or Other, in after-Ages, were very prone to run into the *Extreme* of *Licentiousness*, taking an Handle from the Doctrine of *Grace*; as Others were apt to run into the *Proud Extreme*, from the Doctrine of the *Value* and *Necessity*

* See Rom. iii. 31. vi. 1, &c.

† Rom iv. 4. xi. 6.

‡ Rom. iii. 27. 1 Cor. i. 29, 31. Ephes. ii. 9. Rom. iv. 2.

§ James ii. 14—26.

|| 1 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. 1 John iii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

essary of a *good Life*; may be judged from what a *Father* of the Vth Century says in Opposition to *Both* *.

It is certain that the *Antinomian* and *Solifidian* Doctrines, as taught by Some in later Times, have deviated into a *Wild Extreme*, and have done infinite Mischief to *practical Christianity*. I have not Room to enumerate, much less to confute, the many *erroneous* and *dangerous Tenets* which have come from That Quarter: Neither would I be forward to expose them again to publick View. They have been often *considered*, and often *confuted*. Let them rather be buried in Oblivion, and never rise up again to bring Reproach upon the *Christian Name*. But take We due Care so to maintain the Doctrine of *Faith*, as not to *exclude* the *Necessity* of *good Works*; and so to maintain *good Works*, as not to *exclude* the *Necessity* of *CHRIST's Atonement*, or the *Free Grace* of God. Take We Care to perform all evangelical Duties to the utmost of our Power, aided by God's Spirit; and when we have so done, say, that we are *unprofitable Servants*, having no strict *Claim* to a Reward, but yet looking for one, and accepting it as a *Favour*, not challenging it as *due* in any Right of our *own*; due only upon *free Promise*, and that Promise made not in Consideration of any *Deserts of ours*, but in and thro' the alone *Merits*, active and passive, of *CHRIST JESUS* our Lord.

* Si se Homo justificaverit, & de Justitia sua praesumerit, cadit: Si considerans & cogitans Infirmitatem suam, & praesumens de Misericordia Dei, neglexerit Vitam suam mundare a Peccatis suis, & se omni Gurgite Flagitiorum demerferit, & ipse cadit. Praesumptio de Justitia quasi dextera est: Cogitatio de Impunitate Peccatorum, quasi sinistra est. Audiamus Vocem Dei dicentem Nobis, *ne declines in dexteram aut sinistram*, Prov. iv. 27. Ne praesumas ad Regnum de Justitia tua: Ne praesumas ad peccandum de Misericordia Dei. Ab utroque Te revocat Praeceptum divinum, & ab illa *Altitudine*, & ab ista *Profunditate*: Illic si ascenderis, praecipitaberis; hac si lapsus fueris, demergèris, *Augustin.* in Psal. xxxi. p. 171. Tom. IV.

I am very glad to hear that you are well and hope
 that you will continue to be so. I am well at present
 and hope to be so for some time. I am very glad to
 hear that you are well and hope that you will continue
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CONCERNING THE

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INFANT-COMMUNION,

As founded on the Notion of its *Strict Necessity*.

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OF

INFANT-COMMUNION

As founded on the Notion of its being Necessary.

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THE Article of *Infant-Communion*, tho' not much thought of amongst us (as we have not had much Occasion) is a Part of the general Subject of the *Eucharist*, and may deserve some Consideration at this Time; if it be only for the Sake of clearing up a Point of Doctrine in some Degree, and for the obviating such Scruples as have been raised about it.

Some have censured it, as *Ancient Practice* built upon *erroneous Principles*, aggravating every Circumstance after an *indivious* Manner, in Order to raise a *general Prejudice* against the *Ancients**, as of slight Authority.

Others have laid hold on the same Topick, for sinking the Credit of the *Fathers* with respect to one *particular Point*; namely, That of *Infant-Baptism*: For, say They, if the *Ancients* were so widely mistaken in regard to *Infant-Communion*; what great stress can be laid, either upon Their *Judgment*, or Their *Practice*, in the Article of *Infant-Baptism* †?

Others, lastly (tho' very Few in these Parts of the World) have declared their Approbation of *Infant-Communion*, and have seriously pleaded for a Revival of it. Dr. BEDELL, of the last Century (Bishop of *Kilmore* in *Ireland*) seems to have been in those Sentiments‡: And now lately, a pretty large Essay has been publish'd, on Purpose to recommend

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* *Dallaeus de Usu Patrum*, L. I. c. viii. p. 175. L. II. c. iv. p. 293. De Cult. Relig. L. V. c. 3, 4, 20.

Clericus, Animadv. in Op. Augustini, p. 521.

Whitby, *Strictures* Patrum, p. 212, &c.

† See Dr. *Wall*. Hist. of Inf. Bapt. Part II. c. 9. § 17. Vol. II. p. 447. Ed. 3.

‡ Bishop *Bedell*, in *Usher's Letters*, No. 163. p. 442, 443.

The *Ancient Practice* (as it is supposed) of *Infant-Communion* §.

These Things considered, The Question appears to be worth the looking into: And so my present Design is to offer some Thoughts upon it, in Order to set that Matter, so far as I may, in a just Light, for the removing Scruples, or for the rectifying Misconceptions.

It seems to be a Mistake to imagine, that *Infant-Communion* (if we understand it of *mere Infants*) was the *Ancient Practice* of the Church. There is no Appearance of any Thing of that Kind before the *Middle* of the *Third Century*, the Time of CYPRIAN; and That in the *African Churches* only: And all that can be proved from CYPRIAN, is, that *Children* (Boys and Girls, not *mere Infants*) were then and there brought to Communion. Neither is there any clear Proof, that They were brought thither under a Notion of any *strict Necessity*: For it might be done upon such *prudential Reasons* as move Us to bring *Children* to Church at this Day, training Them up in the Way that They should go; or, if it was founded upon stronger Reasons, they might be such as resolved only into the then present *Expediency*, or into a superabundant *Caution*; as I shall endeavour to make out more at large in the Sequel.

From the *Middle* of the *Third Century*, down to the Beginning of the *Fifth*, we hear little or Nothing of the Practice. We must take a large Stride, from St. CYPRIAN, down as low as to St. AUSTIN, before We come at any Thing which does but look that Way. In St. AUSTIN's Works, from the Time of the *Pelagian Controversy* (which began about A. D. 410,) there are some Passages which have been thought uncontestable Evidences of the Practice of *Infant-Communion* in His Time, as likewise of its being founded upon a Notion of *strict Necessity*, as taught in *John* the VIth,

I.
St. AUSTIN hath been supposed to maintain, that *Infant-Communion* is as necessary to Life Eternal, as *Infant-Baptism*; and that *baptized Infants* have as much Need of the *Eucharist*, as the *unbaptized* have of the *other Sacrament*; Both Sacraments being *alike necessary* to the Salvation of all Persons.

But St. AUSTIN hath never *directly* and in *Terms* said, that *Baptized Infants* cannot be saved without the *Eucharist*: It is
no

§ An Essay in Favour of the ancient Practice of giving the *Eucharist* to *Children*. By James Peirce of Exon. A. D. 1728.

no express Doctrine of That great Man, but a *Consequence* only, drawn from his Words; and not by any considerable Writers of *His Time*, or near it (so far as appears) but by Some who came long after Him, and in *Contradiction* to Those who lived in the *Ages next* to Him. Whether the *Consequences*, so drawn and fix'd upon Him in later Ages, be really just; and whether His Meaning was truly such as hath been pretended, is now the Point of Enquiry: And I shall proceed to examine into it with some Care.

First.—If St. AUSTIN's other most avowed, and often repeated Principles are a standing *Contradiction* to the supposed *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*; That will afford a strong Presumption against what He has been charged with, and such as cannot, or in Reason ought not, to be over-ruled, but by Something stronger. This being premised, as a safe general Ground to rest upon, and abide by, I now go on to the Enquiry.

St. AUSTIN's Doctrine of the compleat *Sufficiency* of *Baptism* to the *Salvation* of Infants, is so fully express'd many Ways, and so frequently inculcated in his Works; that it is scarce conceivable, how He could imagine The *Eucharist* to be *necessary* over and above; unless we could suppose Him the most inconsistent, self-destroying Writer in the World. To come to Particulars.

1. In the first Place, His constant, standing Doctrine is, that *Baptism* confers *perfect Remission* of all Sin*; Which was also the known Doctrine of the whole Church before His Time, and after †. Now, as *Salvation* must of Course follow upon *perfect Remission* so long as it abides (and abide it must in Infants *Baptized*, till guilty of *actual Sin*) with what Sense or Consistency could St. AUSTIN teach, that Infants once *baptized* could have any present Need of the *Eucharist*, to bring Them into a State of *Salvation*?

2. Another standing Principle with St. AUSTIN, was, that *Baptism*, singly, gives a present, certain Title to *Life eternal* ‡. How

* Qui regenerantur in Christo, Remissionem accipiunt prorsus omnium Peccatorum. *Augustin. de Nupt. & Concupiscent. L. I. c. xxvi. p. 294. Tom. X. E. l. Bened. Conf. p. 299, 423, 424, 458, 540. Tom. X.*

† See my *Review*, &c. c. x. p. 383. &c.

And *Bingham*, B. XI. c. i. § 2.—B. XIX. c. i. § 2.

‡ Simul *Justitiae, Vitaeque aeternae* Secundi Homini Sociati renascuntur in Baptismo. *Augustin. de Peccat. Merit. L. I. c. xvi. p. 12. Absit ut Causam Parvulorum sic relinquamus, ut esse Nobis dicamus incertum, utrum in Christo regenerati, si moriantur parvuli, transiant in aeternam*

How then could the same *Father* consistently say or mean, that They could not be *saved* without the *Eucharist* *?

3. It was likewise an avowed *Principle* with St. AUSTIN, and the whole Church, that Infants, by their *Baptism*, were constituted *Fideles*, were of the Number of the *Faithful* †; which was as High and Honourable a Name as could be given to *actual* Communicants, to true and good Christians. If therefore Infants were already, by *Their Baptism*, intituled to the *Name and Privileges of Communicants*, for the Time being, They could not want the *outward Sacrament of the Eucharist*, to make Them more so.

4. Another noted *Principle* of St. AUSTIN was, that The *Grace of a Mediator* was the *one Thing necessary* to the *Salvation* of Infants, and that such *Grace* was given Them, in and by *Baptism* †: Therefore again, by His Accounts, the partaking of the *outward Sacrament of the Eucharist* could not be *necessary* to the *Salvation of baptized Infants*.

5. It was St. AUSTIN's *settled Persuasion*, that *Baptized Infants* could never afterwards forfeit the *salutary Grace* once given at the Font, till They should become guilty of *actual Sins* §. From whence it plainly follows, that They could not forfeit it by Their not receiving the *Eucharist* during Their Non-Age.

6. St.

aeternam Salutem. *De Don. Perseverant.* c. xii. p. 337. Tom. X. Conf. p. 273, 274, 279, 291, 292, 318, 328, 449, 450, 482, 536, 680, 686, 899, 902, 1023, 1074, Tom. X. item p. 922. Tom. V. & 1190, T. V.

Quicumque negat Parvulos per Baptismum Christi a Perditione liberari, & Salutem percipere sempiternam, Anathema sit. *Concil. Carthag. in Augustin. Epist. CLXXV.* p. 620, Tom. II. Conf. p. 266, 268, 311, 385.

* Conf. *Wall's Hist. of Infant-Baptism*, Part. I. c. xv. § 5. Vol. I, p. 202.

† Parvulum, etsi nondum Fides illa, quae in Credentium Voluntate consistit, jam tamen ipsius Fidei Sacramentum *Fidelem* facit.—*Fidelis* vocatur, non Rem ipsa Mente annuendo, sed ipsius Rei Sacramentum percipiendo. *Augustin. Ad Bonifac. Ep. XCVIII.* (alias XXII.) p. 268.

Ubi ergo Parvulos ponimus baptizatos, nisi inter *Fideles*, sicut *universae* ubique *Ecclesiae* clamat Auctoritas? *Augustin. De Peccat. Merit. L. I. c. xxxiii.* p. 35. Conf. c. xxv. p. 20. Item *Serm. CCXCIV.* p. 1119, 1190, 1192. T. V.

‡ Vid. *Augustin. Epist. CLXVI.* p. 585, 591, 592. *De Peccat. Merit. Lib. I. c. xxii, xxv.*

§ Respondeo, tantam illius Sacramenti, Hoc est, *Baptismi Salutaris*, esse Virtutem in sancta Compagne Corporis Christi, ut, semel generatus per Aliorum Carnalem Voluptatem, cum semel *regeneratus* fuerit per Aliorum Spiritualem Voluntatem, deinceps non possit Vinculo alienae Iniquitatis obstringi, cui nulla sui Voluntate consentit.—Semel perceptum Parvulus *Gratiam* non amittit nisi propria Impietate, &c. *Epist. XCVIII.* (alias XXIII.) p. 263, 264.

6. St. AUSTIN farther teaches, that Infants, by Their *Baptism*, are made the *Temple of the Holy Spirit*, and thereby sealed, and insured to everlasting *Salvation* *. How could This be, if *Baptism* still wanted to be rendered salutary by the *Other Sacrament*, by the outward *Eucharist*?

7. Elsewhere He expressly maintains, that *Spiritual Regeneration* (by which He means *Baptism* of Water, and of the Spirit) is alone sufficient to deliver an Infant from the *Power of Darkness*, and to translate Him into the *Kingdom of Christ*; and to secure Him, if He dies in that State, against all Manner of Pains or Perils in a World to come †. Could He consistently say This, had He thought that *Both Sacraments* were as necessary, as *Baptism alone*?

8. Another Principle of St. AUSTIN's, consonant with Those before mention'd, is, that *Baptism* makes an Infant a *Member of Christ*: not merely a Member of the outward Church, but a vital or living Member of *Christ's Body* ‡.

9. Another noted Doctrine of St. AUSTIN, near akin to the former, is, that the Sacrament of *Baptism* amounts to a compleat *Ingraffment*, or *Incorporation* in *Christ*, and that such *Incorporation* or *Ingraffment* is a principal End and Use of *Baptism*, being a necessary Qualification for, or Introduction to *Eternal Life*: Which He collects from our Lord's Doctrine laid down in *John vi.* § From all which we may reasonably draw

* Dicimus ergo, in baptizatis Parvulis, quamvis id nesciant, habitare Spiritum Sanctum, Ep. CLXXXVII. c. viii. p. 686. Templum Dei futurus es, cum Baptismum acceperis. De Fid. & Op. c. xii. p. 175. Tom. VI.

† Tanta est Dei Misericordia—Ut etiam prima Hominis Ætas, id est, Infantia, si Sacramenta Mediatoris acceperit, etiam si hanc in eis Vitam finiat, translata scilicet a Potestate Tenebrarum in Regnum Christi, non solum Pœnis non præparetur æternis, sed ne ulla quidem post Mortem purgatoria Tormenta patiatur. Sufficit enim sola spiritualis Regeneratio, ne post Mortem obit quod Carnalis Generatio cum Morte contrahit. De Civit. Dei, L. XXI. c. xvi. p. 636. Tom. VIII. Conf. De Peccat. Merit. L. I. c. xix.

N. B. Though He says *Sacramenta* in the plural, He means only *Baptism*; as is plain by what follows. It is very common with the Fathers to express a single Sacrament in that plural Way; as is well known to the Learned, with the Reasons of it. Daille has often noted it; and has manifested the same by great Variety of Evidences, in his Book *De Confirmatione*.

‡ Nec viveremus, nisi per Spiritualem Connexionem Membra hujus essemus: Ideo Nobis Opus fuit nasci, & renasci, Epist. CLXXXVII. p. 688. Membrum Christi futurus es, cum acceperis Baptismum. De Fid. & Op. c. xii. p. 175. Tom. VI. Omnes qui renascuntur, Membra ipsius sunt.—Si vis ascendere, esto in Corpore Christi: Si vis ascendere, esto Membrum Christi, Serm. CCXCIV. p. 1188. Tom. V.

§ Nihil agitur aliud cum Parvuli baptizantur, nisi ut incorporentur Ecclesiae,

draw the following Inferences: 1. That, since *Baptism* amounts to a compleat *Incorporation*, for the Time being, it could not want the *Other* Sacrament to make it more so. 2. That, since *Baptismal* Incorporation is a Pledge of *eternal Life* by it self, it could not need the *Eucharist* to make it *salutary*. 3. That, since St. AUSTIN drew This Doctrine chiefly from *John vi.* He must have understood the *Incorporation* there spoken of, as a Privilege *common* to *Both* Sacraments. But of That Particular I shall say more in its proper Place.

10. But further, The same *Father* does not only suppose that a *baptized* Infant has Part in the *Body of Christ*; but that He is, by his Baptism, *dipped*, as it were, in the *Blood of Christ*: For He teaches that *Baptism*, or the *Baptismal Water*, is *red* (so He figuratively expresses it) with the *Blood of Christ*, as *consecrated* in it, or by it*. Other *Fathers* of the Church express the same Thing in still plainer and stronger Terms: And it was the prevailing Doctrine of *Antiquity*, that all the spiritual Graces of the *Eucharist* were conveyed in *Baptism*, as well as in the *Eucharist*; and that as Many as were duly *baptized*, were, in Effect, thereby made *Partakers* of the *Body and Blood of Christ* †: Such being the high Notions of the *Sufficiency* of *Baptism*, universally prevailing in those Times, what Room could there then be for the Doctrine of the strict *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*?

11. Another Doctrine of St. AUSTIN, is, that All Those, who are really *Members of Christ*, *true* and *living* Members, do, *ipso Facto*, in Virtue of such their *Membership*, continually eat his *Flesh*, and drink his *Blood* ‡. Hence it follows, that Infants *baptized*, having thereby been made *true* and *living*

Ecclesiae, id est, *Christi Corpori Membrisque societur*, -- Nonne Veritas sine ulla Ambiguitate proclamatur, non solum in *Regnum Dei* non baptizatos Parvulos intrare non posse, sed nec *Vitam aeternam* posse habere, praeter *Christi Corpus*, cui ut incorporarentur, Sacramento *Baptismatis* imbuuntur? *Augustin. De Peccat. Merit. L. III. c. iv. p. 74, 75.*

* Significabat Mare rubrum Baptismum Christi. Unde rubet Baptismus Christi, nisi Christi Sanguine consecratus? In Joann. Tract. XI. p. 377. Tom. III. Conf. p. 942. Tom. V.

† The Testimonies are collected into one View by *Albertinus De Eucharist. p. 448, 564.* And by *Bingham, XI. 10, 4. XV. 4, 7.*

‡ Qui ergo est in ejus Corporis Unitate, id est, in Christianorum communi Membrorum (cujus Corporis Sacramentum Fideles, communicantes de Altari, sumere consueverunt) Ipse velle dicendus est manducare Corpus Christi, & bibere Sanguinem Christi. De Civit. Dei. L. XXI. p. 646. N. B. St. *Augustin* allows this to be true, provided such *Membership* has not been forfeited by some voluntary Transgressions; and therefore He must be presumed to allow the Fact with Regard to *baptized* Infants not yet capable of *actual* Sin.

living Members of Christ, and having never yet forfeited Their Privilege by any *actual Sin*, must of Course be supposed, in Virtue of That Their *Membership*, continually to eat Christ's *Flesh*, and to drink his *Blood*, in such a Sense as St. AUSTIN there speaks of; and therefore could not be by Him supposed to lie under any *Necessity* of having That by *Two Sacraments*, which was effectually supplied by *One*.

12. I must further take Notice of Another *Principle* of St. AUSTIN's, which may appear somewhat refined and uncommon; but was a favourite Notion, and what He much dwelt upon: It was This; that *Baptism* makes a Person to be that *very Thing* which is *mystically represented* and *participated* in the *Eucharist**. He grounds the Notion on St. PAUL's Words: *We being Many are one Bread, and one Body*, &c. Therefore Christians are Themselves the *Body* signified, or represented by the *Bread* of the *Eucharist*: Therefore every true Christian makes a *Part* of what That Bread signifies, and of what the Communicants partake of. Whether the Notion be strictly just, is not now the Question: It was St. AUSTIN's Notion, and That is sufficient for our present Purpose. For, if *Baptized* Infants, being of the Number of the *Faithful*, and so making a *Part* of Christ's Body the Church, were, in Consequence, a Part also of the Body *signified* and *participated* in the *Eucharist*; They could not need the *outward Eucharist* to bind Them *closer* to the Body of Christ, or to make Them *Partakers* of it. This Argument is well urged by FULGENTIUS†, to the very same Purpose for which I now urge it; namely, to shew that *Baptism*, during Infancy, was in St. AUSTIN's Account, *equivalent* to *Both Sacraments*; and in such Case, either virtually supplied, or fully superseded the *external Eucharist*. I have now enumerated 12 several Articles of *Doctrine*, All maintained by St. AUSTIN, and All seeming to contradict (directly or indirectly) the supposed *Necessity* of Infants-

* Si bene accepistis. Vos estis quod accepistis: Apostolus enim dicit, unus Panis unum Corpus Multi sumus.—Vos ante, jejunii Humiliatione, & exorcismi Sacramento, quasi molebamini: Acceluit Baptismus, & Aqua quasi conpersi estis, ut ad Ferream Panis veniretis.—Accedit Spiritus Sanctus, post Aquam Ignis, & effieimini Panis, quod est Corpus Christi Sermon. CCXXVII. p. 973. Tom. V. Conf. Sermon. CCXXIX. p. 976.

Ad Aquam venistis & conpersi estis, & Unum facti estis: Accedente Ferore Spiritus Sancti cœli estis, & Panis Dominicus facti estis. Ecce quod accepistis. Sermon. CCXXIX. p. 976. Conf. Sermon. CCLXXII. p. 1103. Tom. V. Contr. Faust. L. XII. c. viii. N. B. The losing this Notion, has been the chief Occasion of missing St. Austin's true Sense: The reviving it will make every Thing clear.

† Fulgent, ad Ferand. p. 126.

Infant-Communion. Wherefore, it appears not reasonable to conceive, that He really espoused any such *Necessity*, in *Contradiction* to his own standing *Principles*: Much less probable is it, that He should go on in it, Time after Time, for near 20 Years together, never suspecting any *Inconsistency* in it (so far as appears) never charged by his Adversaries, the *Pelagians*, with it. Such is our Argument *a priori*, that St. AUSTIN could not teach, could not intend to teach the strict *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*: He could not do it with any *Sense* or *Consistency*; because He constantly maintained, many Ways, the complete *Sufficiency* of *Baptism* to the *Salvation* of all *Infants*, during such their *Infant-State*.

Secondly—But, besides what has been thus urged *a priori*, to shew that He could not teach such *Necessity*; there are yet other Considerations *a posteriori*, to be taken in, which may persuade us that He did not.

1. He did not ordinarily interpret *John VIth* of the *outward Sacrament* of the *Eucharist*, but of the *inward Grace* signified by it, or exhibited in it. There is this very observable Difference between *John iii. 5.* and *John vi. 53.* that the former Text teaches the *Necessity* both of the *outward Sacrament*, and of the *inward Grace*; while the latter teaches only the *Necessity* of the *inward Grace*, abstracted from the *outward Signs*. Had the *Eucharist* been as plainly pointed out in *John the VIth*, as *Baptism* is in *John the IIIrd*, Both must have been allowed to be equally necessary: But it is worth observing, that the former teaches the *Necessity* of spiritual Regeneration and Incorporation, as confined to one particular Form, or *outward Instrument*; the latter teaches the same *Necessity* of spiritual Incorporation, at large, not mentioning any particular Form, not restraining the Privilege or Benefit to the *Eucharist* only.

St. AUSTIN seems to have been well aware of This Distinction, by His so frequently interpreting *John vi.* not directly of the *outward Eucharist*, but of the *inward Graces* only, signified by it. Sometimes He interprets the *Feeding*, there mention'd, to mean only The partaking of the *Body* of Christ, or of being incorporated in Christ*: Sometimes, He makes it the same with *abiding*, or *dwelling* in Christ†, or with being

Members

* *Nisi manducaverint Homines Carnem ejus: Hoc est, Participas facti fuerint Corporis ejus. De Peccat. Merit. L. III. c. iv. Vis ergo vivere de Spiritu Christi? In Corpore esto Christi.—Accedat, credat, incorporetur, ut viviscetur. In Joann. Tract. XXVI. p. 499. Tom. III. Conf. De Civit. Dei L. XXI. c. xxv. p. 646.*

† *Manducare illam Flesm, & illum bibere Potum, est in Christo manere,*

Members of Christ *, or with being the *Temple of Christ* † : All which *Privileges* He look'd upon as *common* to *Both* Sacraments, and not confined to the *Eucharist* only ; as may sufficiently appear from what I have before noted in Relation to the *Sufficiency of Baptism*, as taught by the same Father. Therefore, by His Accounts, Infants must have been supposed to enjoy, in and by Virtue of Their *Baptism*, all that *John* the Vith directly speaks of as *necessary to Life* ; and therefore This Father *did not* so interpret that Chapter as to make it favour the supposed *Necessity of Infant-Communion*.

Sometimes He interprets The *Meat* mention'd in St. *John*, of an *Alliance*, or *Union* with Christ ‡, and sometimes of the *Grace* sent from above § ; which, by His Accounts, is *common* to *Baptism* with the *Eucharist* : And therefore again, *baptized* Infants, as such, must have been by Him supposed to *feed* spiritually upon Christ, in such a Sense as our Lord there speaks of, and could not want the *outward* *Eucharist* to make Them Partakers of the spiritual Banquet : Wherefore St. *AUSTIN* scruples not to say, that while a Person is *regenerated*, or *born again* (meaning in *Baptism*) He *feeds* upon Christ, is *feasted*, is *satiated* ¶ with that Heavenly Food : Such plainly is His Meaning.

2. To confirm This farther, it may be noted, that St. *AUSTIN* makes the *putting on of Christ* (which is done in *Baptism*) to be tantamount in Sense, and equivalent in Virtue or Efficacy for the obtaining *eternal Life*, with the *feeding upon Him* :

novus, & illum manentem in se habere. In Johann. Tract. II. 301. Conf. 304.

Re vera Christi Corpus manducare, & ejus Sanguinem bibere; hoc est, in Christo manere, ut in Illo maneat & Christus. *De Civit. Dei. L. XXI. c. xxv. p. 647.*

* Ut simus in ejus Corpore, sub ipso Capite in Membris. In Johan. Tract. XXVII. p. 302. Manemus autem in Illo, cum sumus Membra ejus, p. 304. Nec Isti ergo dicendi sunt manducare Corpus Christi, quoniam nec in Membris computandi sunt Christi. *De Civit. Dei, L. XXI. c. xxv. p. 646.*

† Manet autem Ipse in Nobis, cum sumus Templum ejus. In Johan. Tract. XXVII. p. 304. Signum quia manducat & bibit, Hoc est, si manet & manetur, si habitat & inhabitatur, ib. 302.

‡ Hunc Cibum & Potum Societatem vult intelligi Corporis & Membrorum suorum. In Johan. Tract. XXVII. p. 302.

§ Nemo autem implet Legem, nisi quam adjuverit Gratia; id est, Panis qui de Coelo descendit. In Johan. Tract. XXVI. p. 494.

¶ Qui credit, manducat: invisibiliter saginatur, quia invisibiliter renascitur: Infans natus est novus intus est. Ubi novellatur, ibi satiatur. In Johan. Tract. XXVI. p. 494.

Him * : Indeed, all that He meant to prove against the *Pelagians*, by quoting *John vi.*, was only This; that Infants must *bave Christ*, must have *Part in Christ*, in Order to *eternal Life*; and could not be *saved*, could not have *Life*, in or by their *natural, unregenerate State* †, as the *Pelagians* pretended. He had no Occasion to say, or to conceive, *baptized Infants* could not be *saved* without the *Eucharist*; neither does He once say it; But What He was concern'd to prove, was, that *unbaptized Infants*, ordinarily, could not come at *Life eternal* †: And He proves it by this Medium; that Infants could have *no Life* without *partaking* of Christ, whom They could not *partake* of without being *incorporate* in Christ, and That by *Baptism*. That such *Incorporation*, once made in *Baptism*, wants to be *completed, improved, or renewed*, by the *Eucharist* during Infancy, He no where teaches: But in a Multitude of Places (as hath been shewn) He either directly or indirectly teaches, that, during the State of *mere Infancy*, it *does not*: Because *Baptism* alone, for the Time being, is *sufficient* to all Intents and Purposes, and is, in effect, *feeding* upon the *Body and Blood* of Christ.

3. To confirm this still farther, We may note, that St. AUSTIN entertained so high an Opinion of the *Virtue* and *Efficacy* of *Baptism* to *Salvation*, from the Beginning to the End of the *spiritual Life*, that He look'd upon all other *religious Offices* as deriving, in a great Measure, their Use and Force from it. He supposes not only the *first Remission* at the Font, but *all Remission* upon *Prayer* or *Repentance* afterwards, to look back

* Non autem habere Parvulos Vitam, nisi habeant Christum, quem precul dubio habere non possunt, nisi induerint Eum eo modo quo Scriptum est; Quotquot in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis: Non ergo habere Vitam, nisi habeant Christum, Johannes Evangelista testatur dicens, Qui habet Filium, habet Vitam: Qui non habet Filium Vitam non habet. Contr. Julian. L. VI. c. xxvii. p. 677.

† Quid enim apertius tot tantisque Testimoniis Divinorum Eloquiorum, quibus dilucidissime apparet, nec praeter Christi Societatem ad Vitam Salutemque aeternam posse quemquam Hominem pervenire. — Nonne Veritas sine ulla Ambiguitate proclamat, non solum in Regnum Dei, non baptizatos Parvulos intrare non posse, sed nec Vitam aeternam posse habere praeter Christi Corpus, cui ut incorporentur, Sacramento Baptismatis imbuuntur. De Peccat. Merit. L. III. c. iv. p. 74, 75.

‡ Hoc Testimonium adhibitum est Evangelicum, ne Parvuli non-baptizati vitam posse habere credantur. Epist. ad Paulin. 186. No. 28. p. 673.

Si autem cedunt Domino Apostolorum, qui dicit non habituros Vitam in semetipsis, nisi manducaverint Carnem Filii Hominis & biberint Sanguinem (quod nisi baptizati non utique possunt) nempe aliquando favebuntur Parvulos non-baptizatos Vitam habere non posse. Ibid. No. 29. p. 673.

back to *Baptism*, and to stand in it, or to be as Nothing without it*. Even *Eucharistical Remission*, and *Eucharistical Graces*, by the same Principle, can be only *Baptismal Remission* and *Baptismal Graces* continued, or reiterated. He calls the *Lord's Prayer* a *quotidian Baptism*†, while He considered it as an Instrument of Pardon, and as offered up in and with the *Eucharist*‡; which amounts to calling the *Eucharist* itself a kind of *quotidian Baptism*. Now, if St. AUSTIN believed, that *Baptism* had its *federal Effect* during the *whole spiritual Life*, and that it operated in all other religious Offices, or *Services*, deriving, as it were, its own *Virtue* and *Efficacy* upon them; it is obvious to conceive how, in His Account, an Infant already baptized, and having hitherto done Nothing to *forfeit* the Graces or Benefits of it, might be justly said to *partake* even of the *Lord's Table*, as partaking of That Sacrament, which *virtually carried in it* all the *Life* and *Spirit* of the *Other*; and which was *originally, primarily, eminently*, All that the *Other* is in a *secondary Way*, or in *Consequence* of *Baptism*.

4. I shall only add farther (to shew that St. AUSTIN had no Notion of any such strict *Necessity* of the *Eucharist* to All Persons baptized; as He had of the *Necessity* of *Baptism* to the *Unbaptized*) that, when a Case was put to Him, concerning the *Salvation* of the *Thief upon the Cross* §, as dying unbaptized, He appeared to be very much perplexed with it, and not willing to admit the Fact; conceiving that, probably, the Thief had received *Baptism*, or however that the *negative* could not be proved. He esteem'd that Solution to be the safest, to evade the whole Difficulty. All the while, tho' He was well aware, or might certainly know, that the same *Thief* died without

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ever

* *Augustin. De Nupt & Concupisc. L. I. p. 298.*

Hesychius well expresses his Sense in few Words: *Virtus praecedentis Baptismatis operatur & in ea quae postea acta fuerit Penitentia.* In *Levit. L. II. p. 118.* Compare my Review, &c. p. 329.

† *Remissio Peccatorum non est in sola Ablutione sacri Baptismatis, sed etiam in Oratione Dominica quotidiana.*---In illa invenietis quasi *quotidianum Baptismum vestrum.* *Serm. CCXIII. c. viii.* Conf. *De Fid. & Op. c. xxvi. p. 191.* *Enchirid. c. lxxi. p. 223.* *De Symbol. ad Catech. c. vii. p. 555.* Tom. VI.

‡ Constituit Deus in Ecclesia, Tempore, Misericordiae prorogandae, *Quotidianam Medicinam*, ut dicamus *dimitte nobis debita nostra*, &c. ut his Verbis lota facie, ad Altare accedamus, & his Verbis lota facie, Corpore Christi & Sanguine communicamus. *Serm. De Scriptur. p. 96.* Tom. VI. Conf. p. 869. *Eucharist called quotidiana Medicina.* *Epist. LIV. (alias CXVIII) p. 125.*

§ *Augustin. de Orig. Animae, Lib. I. c. ix. p. 343.* Lib. III. c. ix. p. 379.

ever receiving the *Holy Communion*; yet He was in no Pain about it, so far as appears, nor look'd upon it, as any Difficulty at all: A plain Sign, that He had no such Opinion of the strict *Necessity* of the *Eucharist* to Salvation, as He had of the *Necessity* of *Baptism*.

Having thus endeavoured to shew, many Ways, that St. *AUSTIN* consistently *could not*, yea and that He *did not* teach the *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*; what hinders that We may not now safely and justly reject the contrary Supposition, as a *vulgar Error*, or as an *injurious Charge* upon a very great and good Man, One of the ablest Divines of his Time? It will be pleaded, notwithstanding, that the same Father has, in several Places of his Works, laid down this Principle; that Infants, without Baptism, and without *partaking* of the Lord's *Body* and *Blood**, or without *partaking* of the Lord's *Table*†, cannot enter into Life: And further, He has sometimes interpreted, as it seems, *John* vi. 53. directly of the Lord's *Table*†. But, is it any where expressly or directly said, that *baptized* Infants cannot have *Life* without the *Eucharist*? No; not once, in all This Father's Writings. And yet, if That were really his Meaning, it is very strange and unaccountable that He should never once declare it in plain or broad Terms. Why did He never argue against the *Pelagians* (as the Objection supposes He should) in some such Form as This, *viz.* That it

* *Beatæ Memoriae Innocentius Papa, sine Baptismo Christi, & sine Participatione Corporis & Sanguinis Christi vitam non habere Parvulos, dixit. Augustin. ad Bonifac. contr. 2. Epist. Pelag. L. II. c. iv. p. 436. Tom. X.*

Si ergo, ut tot & tanta Testimonia concinunt, nec Salus, nec Vita aeterna sine Baptismo, & Corpore & Sanguine Domini cuiquam speranda est, frustra sine his promittitur Parvulis. *De Peccator. Merit. L. I. c. xxiv. p. 20.*

Nullus qui se meminit Catholicae Fidei Christianum, negat aut dubitat, Parvulos non accepta Gratia Regenerationis in Christo, sine Cibo Carnis ejus & Sanguinis Potu, non habere in se Vitam. *Ad Paulin. Epist. 126. (alias 106.) p. 673.*

† Ecclesiae Christi insitum tenent praeter Baptismum & Participationem Mensae Dominicae, non solum ad Regnum Dei, sed nec ad Salutem & Vitam aeternam posse Quemquam Hominem pervenire. *De Peccator. Merit. L. I. c. xxiv. p. 19.* Infantes sunt, sed Mensae ejus participes fiunt, ut habeant in se Vitam. *Serm. CLXXIV. p. 834. Tom. V. But compare p. 973.*

Cur ministratur Sanguis (qui de similitudine Peccati in Remissionem fusus est Peccatorum) quem bibit parvulus ut habere possit Vitam, si de nullius Peccati Origine venit in Mortem. *Opus imperfect. contr. Julian. L. II. c. xxx. p. 967.*

‡ Dominum audiamus, inquam, non quidem Hoc de Sacramento loquari dicentem, sed de Sacramento Mensae suae, quo Nemo ritè nisi baptizatus accedit: Nisi manducaveritis, &c. non habebitis Vitam in Vobis. Quid ultra quaerimus? *De Peccator. Merit. L. I. c. xx. p. 15.*

It is so far from being true, that *unbaptized* Infants can have *Life*; that even Infants *baptized* can have no *Life* without the *Eucharist* over and above Their *Baptism*? This would have been arguing *a Fortiori*, and in a very clear and affecting Way; such as could not have escaped so acute a Wit, had That been really His Meaning, or such His Principle: But He has *never done it*; which alone is a good presumptive Argument, that He *never meant it*. But in Order to give a just Solution of the objected Difficulties arising from some *few* Passages, *seemingly repugnant* to the whole Tenour of His *standing Doctrines*; We ought to attend carefully to His other most *avowed Tenets*, and to His customary Train of Ideas. Infants cannot be saved without *Baptism*, and without *partaking* of the *Body and Blood* of Christ. Right: They cannot be saved without the *outward* washing, and the *inward* Grace super-added: They cannot be saved without *Baptism*, and what *Baptism* constantly *carries with it* *, where no Bar or Obstacle interferes; as there is none in that case. But what is it which *Baptism carries with it*? St. AUSTIN has before told us: Infants are thereby *cleansed* from all *Defilement*, purged from all Sin, for the Time being: They are become *regenerate* by the *Holy Spirit*, are of the Number of the *Faithful*, are the *Children of God*, have *Part* in Christ, and His *Passion*, and the *salutary* Influences of it; are the *Temple* of the *Holy Ghost*, and of Christ, are *Members* of Christ's *Body*, are *incorporate* with Him, *abiding* in Him, *inhabited* by Him: They have *put on* Christ, have been *dipp'd* in His *Blood*, *feasted* and *satiated* with it; yea, They are *Partakers* of His *Body*, and are *Themselves* a *Part* of what is *signified*, and of what is *participated* in the *Eucharist*. What can They want more, during Their *Infant-State*, to make Them *Partakers* of Christ's *Body and Blood*, or *Partakers* of the *Lord's Table*? It may be said perhaps, They are not *actually*, not *literally*, *Communicants*: They have not *eaten* the eucharistical *Bread*, nor *drank* the consecrated *Wine*: Very true: But yet They are *Partakers* of the *Spiritual Feast*, and have a *Part* in the *mystical Ban-*

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quet;

* *Chrysostom's* Account of *Baptism*, comprized in a beautiful Climax, may be worth the Inserting, to be compared with *St. Austin's*.

"You are herein made not only *Free* but *Holy*; not only *Holy*, but
 "just likewise; not barely just, but *Children* also; not *Children* only,
 "but *Heirs*; nor merely *Heirs*, but *Brethren* of Christ; nor *Brethren*
 "only, but *Co-heirs*; nor *Co-heirs* only, but *Members* also; nor *Mem-*
 "bers only, but his *Temple*; nor *Temple*-only, but *Organs* of the *Holy*
 "Spirit." *Chrysost.* Homil. ad Neophytas.

Vid. *Wall. Inf. B. Part I. c. xiv. §. 3.*

quet; and therefore are, in Effect, and in just Construction of Gospel-Law, Companions at the Lord's Table. They are *Fideles*, that is, *Communicants*, in just Account (being neither *Catechumens*, nor *Penitents*) and therefore *virtually*, or *interpretatively*, Partakers of the Altar †. They have all Their Christian Privileges entire, have never forfeited any of them. If indeed, They had any new Sins to answer for; or if They had absented from the Communion through any *Contempt*, or *wilful Neglect*; They might then be thought to have *impaired* Their first Privileges, or in some Degree to have *renounced* them; But such is not Their Case. *Baptism* made Them *Commensales* at once, as *Admission* into a *Corporation* makes a Man free of that Corporation, and of all the *Franchises* of it, 'till forfeited by culpable Neglect. Therefore *baptized* Infants, during Their Minority, are *Communicants in Right*, as *true Christians*, and as *Denizens* of the *City of God*; and They are also *Communicants in Effect*, and in *real Enjoyment*, as really partaking of the *Christian Banquet*.

It may still be objected, that St. AUSTIN has never explain'd His Meaning in the Way which I have here done. I allow that He has not directly done it: But He has, here and there, dropp'd Intimations more than sufficient to enable Us to do it for Him, and to warrant Us in the doing it. He had no Occasion Himself to clear up the Difficulty in such a Way, since no

† Daille Himself allows that the Ancients, in some Cases, conceived a *virtual* Confirmation, to amount to the same with *actual*. By Parity of Reason, a *virtual* Communion must have been look'd upon as tantamount to *real*. His Words are,

Iusti autem, eodemque Sensu Sancti, item Fideles apud Veteres dicebantur Christiani, qui omni Ecclesie communione fruebantur, adeoque, quod summum erat, Eucharistiae Participes ad Mensam Domini accumbabant: Qui partim Catechumenis, partim Penitentibus opponebantur, ex quibus ius istius communionis Illi quidem nondum erant adepti, Hi vero crimine suo amiserant.—Apparet Patres (*Eliberitanos*) Eum qui in Fide qua vincetus erat, sed sine Manus Impositione decesserat, eodem Numero ac Nomine censeret quo fuisset si Vivus Manus Impositionem accepisset. *Dallaus de Confirmat. p. 162. Conf. De Cult. Relig. p. 167.*

He had said before:

Non invitus concesserim Eliberitani Concilii Temporibus & sequentibus obtinuisse, ut nisi Qui Manus Impositionem accepissent. Nulli ad *Eucharistiam* admitterentur. P. 161.

These Things laid together, it appears by the Confession even of Daille Himself, that those Ancient Fathers understood Infants Baptized to be in Church-Account *Iusti, Sancti, Fideles*, or in one Word *Communicants*, tho' They lived not to partake either of the *Eucharist*, or the *Chrism*. There were but three Orders in all; *Communicants, Catechumens, Penitents*: Now it is plain that Infants baptized were neither *Catechumens*, nor *Penitents*; therefore They must have been *Communicants* in Church-Account; not *literally*, but *virtually*, or *interpretatively* such.

no One had objected it to Him. Probably it was no Difficulty at all in those Days, while the *ancient* Principles of the Church were better understood, than they have been in later Times. However, it is allowable to make Use of any reasonable Supposition, by which so eminent an Author may turn out *consistent* with Himself, and may stand clear of the invidious Charge of *Self-Contradiction* in a momentous Article. It is no more than doing Justice to His great and admired Name, and to the Church of God in His Time, as well as to an important Doctrine of practical Christianity.

I had almost forgot to take Notice, how, and why St. AUGUSTIN was led to make Use of *John* the viii. 53. (which He supposed to concern chiefly the Sacrament of the *Eucharist*) in Order to prove the *Necessity* of *Baptism* to *Life* eternal. He would have had no Occasion for that Text at all, had it not been for the refined Subtilties of the *Pelagians* in evading other Texts. *John* iii. 5. was express, that without *Baptism* no One could enter into the *Kingdom of God*; and That might have sufficed with fair or reasonable Disputants: But the *Pelagians* eluded it, by contriving an odd Distinction between *God's Kingdom*, and *Life eternal*; pretending that unbaptized Infants, tho' They could not enter into the *Kingdom of God*, properly so called, yet might however be admitted to a State of *Life* and *Bliss* in a World to come*. Now, St. AUGUSTIN, observing such Their perverse Subtilty, had Recourse to *John* vi. 53. in order to defeat and frustrate it. For there, when our Lord again speaks of an *Incorporation* in Christ, as renewed in the *Eucharist*, the Style runs, that without *That* you have no *Life* in you: Therefore it is plain, that any Person who has no *Part* in Christ, who has Nothing but His *natural State* to trust to, is not only shut out from the *Kingdom of God*, but also from *eternal Life*. Neither could it be of Moment to urge, that what our Lord has here said in *John* vi. related more immediately to the Sacrament of the *Eucharist*, than to the other Sacrament of *Baptism*, upon which the Debate turn'd: For, the *Eucharistical* Incorporation depends entirely upon the *Bap-*

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tismal

* Habent quo confugiant, atque ubi delitescant, quia non ait Dominus, Si quis non renatus fuerit ex Aqua & Spiritu, non habebit *Vitam*, Sed, ait, non intrabit in *Regnum Dei*: Nam si illud dixisset, nulla hinc Dubitatio possit oboriri. Auferatur ergo Dubitatio—Dominum audiamus, inquam, non quidem Hoc de Sacramento *Lavacri* dicentem, sed de Sacramento *Mensae suae* quo Nemo rite nisi Baptizatus accedit: *Nisi manducaveritis*, &c. *Augustin.* de Peccat. Merit. L. I. c. xx. p. 15. *Conf. Serm.* CCXCIV. p. 1183. *Tom.* V. De *Origin. Animæ*, L. III. c. xiii. p. 382. *Tom.* X.

ismal one; owes all its Force and Virtue to it, and is but the *same Thing* renewed (and *renewed* it cannot be, if it never *commenced*): Therefore *Baptism*, the initiating Sacrament, the Foundation of our *Union* with Christ, and the very Soul and Spirit of All the *Graces* of the Eucharist, must be *necessary to Life*; which was the Thing to be proved. Such appears to be the Turn and Process of St. AUSTIN's Reasoning on this Head*: And being so understood, it proves what He intended to prove, and no more. It proves the Necessity of *Baptism to Life*; because the *Incorporation* in Christ, upon which *Life* depends, cannot so much as *commence* without it. It does not prove the like Necessity of the *Eucharist*; because the *Incorporation* required subsists *before* it, and *without* it, and, while not *impaired*, does not want to be *renewed*, or *refresh'd* by it: Besides, that while a Person, by Virtue of *One* Sacrament, is as compleatly Partaker of *Christ* and the Holy Spirit, as He could be, in His Circumstances, by *Both*; He is supposed, in true and just Construction, to have *Both* Sacraments in *One*.

To be short, St. AUSTIN did not cite *John vi.* in Order to prove that Infants must *literally* partake of the *Eucharist*; but to prove that They must really have that *Incorporation* which is *common* to *Both* Sacraments, and which, when once given in *Baptism*, and not impaired by any subsequent Sins, makes Them, to all real and salutary Purposes, as much *Partakers* of the *Lord's Table*, and of all the *Benefits* of it, as the participating of the *outward* Eucharist could do. *Literally* They have not *Faith*; and yet They are of the Number of the *Faithful*: *Literally* They exert no *Repentance*; and yet They are considered as *Repenting*†. Even so, and for the like Reason, tho'

* Dilucidissime apparet nec *praeter Christi Societatem* ad Vitam Salutemque aeternam posse quemquam Hominum pervenire—Nihil agitur aliud, cum Parvuli baptizantur, nisi ut *incorporentur Ecclesiae*, id est, Christi Corpori Membrisque socientur—nunquid & illud ambiguum est, nisi quis *renatus* fuerit, &c.—nunquid & illud, quia *nisi manducaverint Homines Carnem ejus*, Hoc est, *Participes facti fuerint Corporis ejus*, non habebunt Vitam? His atque ejusmodi aliis, quæ nunc prætereo, Testimoniis,—nonne Veritas sine ulla Ambiguitate proclamat, non solum in Regnum Dei non baptizatos Parvulos intrare non posse, sed nec Vitam aeternam posse habere *praeter Christi Corpus*, cui ut *incorporentur*, Sacramento *Baptismatis* imbuuntur? *De Peccat. Merit. L. III. c. 4.* N. B. He here resolves the Salvation or eternal Life of *Baptiz'd* Infants into Their *Incorporation* (not into Their participating of the *Eucharist*) even when He quotes *John vi.* among other Texts, to prove it: And He, in the same Breath, fully and expressly maintains, that Infants, in and by *Baptism* singly, obtain that *Incorporation* to which eternal Life is annexed.

† Vid. *Augustin. de Peccator. Merit. L. I. c. xix.*

do' literally They are not *Communicants*; yet They are considered as Such, and really are so in full *Virtue*, and *beneficial Effects*. This Principle St. *AUSTIN* bare in Mind, and constantly supposed, where He did not directly say it.

II.

Having thus far cleared, as I conceive, St. *AUSTIN*, the principal Man, there will be the less Need of saying any Thing of Those Who followed Him in the same Argument; because They are All of Them to be interpreted by the same Rule, and must stand or fall with Him. But because *Pope INNOCENT I. MARIUS MERCATOR, FAUSTUS REIENSIS, Pope GELASIUS I.* and particularly *EUGENTIUS*, All within less than fourscore Years of St. *AUSTIN*, have dropp'd some Things to the like Purpose, and may be of some Use for farther Illustration, or Confirmation of the same Thing; I shall now proceed to consider Them also, and in the same Order as I have named Them.

Pope INNOCENT I. in the Year 417 (five Years after St. *AUSTIN*'s first engaging the *Pelagians* in such Manner as has been mention'd) gives His Thoughts upon this Article, in a Letter sent to the Council of *Milevis* then sitting upon the Question. He, I say, in that Letter, after quoting *John vi. 53.* to prove that Infants can have no Life without Baptism, proceeds thus: "They Who maintain that Infants have Life without Regeneration, seem to Me to be disposed to make void even Baptism it self, by Their asserting that such Infants have That, which it is believed They cannot have conferr'd upon Them any other Way than by Baptism. If therefore their Meaning is, that the Want of Regeneration is no Disadvantage, They must of Consequence say, that the Sacred Waters of Regeneration are of no Advantage *." We may observe from this Paragraph, that the Life spoken of in *John vi.* (whatever Sacrament may there be referred, or alluded to) is expressly declared to be conferred in or by Baptism. Suppose it to be given in the *Eucharist*; yet it is first given in Baptism, yea and in the *Eucharist* by virtue of Baptism: The

E c 4.

Argument

* Illud vero quod eos vestra Fraternitas assentit predicare, Parvulos aeternae Vitae Praemiis sine Baptismatis Gratia posse donari, perfatuum est: Nisi enim manducaverint Carnem Filii Hominis, & biberint Sanguinem ejus, non habebunt Vitam in Semetipsis. Qui autem Hanc [i. e. Vitam] eis sine Regeneratione defendunt, videntur mihi ipsum Baptismum velle cassare, cum praedicant Hos habere quod in Eos creditur non nisi Baptismate conferendum. Si ergo nihil volunt officere non renasci, fateantur necesse est nec Regenerationis Sacra Fluenta prodesse. *Innocent. Epist. apud Augustin.*

Argument turns upon that very Supposition : From whence it is manifest, that our Author conceived the *Eucharistical* Incorporation to be Nothing more than the *Baptismal* one continued, or renewed : Consequently, if the *Baptismal* one remained entire, and unimpaired (as in *Infants* it must) there could be no Need of the *Eucharist* to Them ; because Their *Baptism* hitherto superseded it, or rather, virtually and eminently contain'd it.

For, as *Baptism alone* was both *Faith* and *Repentance* to such *Infants*, according to the Principles of that Age * ; so was it likewise the *Eucharist* to Them, for the same Reason, and in the same Way of favourable and natural Construction.

AS AUSTIN and INNOCENT Both hit upon the same Thought, and held a Correspondence with each Other ; it has been made a Question, Which of Them first suggested it, or Which gave the first Hint : But perhaps Both might have borrowed it from St. CYPRIAN, Who had made use of the same 150 Years before †. CYPRIAN at that Time was aware, that *John vi.* did not so properly teach the Necessity of the outward *Eucharist*, as the Necessity of that inward Incorporation with Christ, signified and exhibited in the *Eucharist* : Which, being begun in *Baptism*, looked back to it, and resolved into it, and still rested in it, as in its proper Seat : Therefore, whatever is said in *John vi.* of the Necessity of having Part in Christ, in Order to *Life*, does, at the same Time, proclaim the absolute Necessity of having it in the first Instance, viz. in *Baptism*, without which there can be no second. Wherefore BEDE (Who was a knowing Divine) understands *John vi. 57.* of what is common to Both Sacraments ‡.

Our next Author to INNOCENT, is MARIUS MERCATOR, Contemporary with Him, and join'd in the same common Cause against the *Pelagians*. He speaks highly of the Graces and Privileges of *Baptism*, as amounting to *Salvation*, *Redemption*, and *Renovation*. Afterwards, quoting *John vi. 53.* which He appears to understand as belonging, or alluding, to the *Eucharist*, He takes notice, that without *Baptism*, no One uses that Other Sacrament, nor is Partaker of it § : Where He seems

* Vid. *Augustin.* de Peccat. Merit. L. I. c. 19, 27.

† Ad Regnum Dei nisi baptizatus & renatus fuerit, pervenire non posse. In Evangelio cata Johannem : Nisi quis renatus fuerit, &c. nisi ederitis Carnem Filii Hominis & biberitis Sanguinem ejus, non habebitis Vitam in vobis. Cyprian. Testimon. L. III. c. xxv. p. 314.

‡ Bed. in Genes. L. I.

§ Videamus Baptisma ipsum, cujus Virtutis sit, quove & quantas habeat Vires, & effectuum causas. Dicit de illo Paulus Apostolus : Qu-

seems to distinguish between *using* that Sacrament, and *partaking* of it. Most certainly, no One comes to the *Eucharist* 'till He has been *baptized*, neither does He savingly *partake* of it (directly or indirectly, literally or interpretatively) without being first *regenerate* by *Baptism*: Therefore, without all Controversy, and beyond all Pretence or Evasion, an *unbaptized* Infant *partakes* not of that Sacrament in any Sense, nor feeds upon the Body or Blood of Christ. Thus far was supposed clear and unquestionable; and it was sufficient to silence the *Pelagians*, with whom the Author was concern'd, and so He proceeded no farther. But had the Question been put, whether a *Baptized* Infant, as Such, might be look'd upon as a *Partaker* of the *Eucharist*, *virtually* or *in Effect*, being *Partaker* of *Salvation* and *Redemption* in Christ; The Author has left Room enough for resolving the Question in the *Affirmative*; yea He has, by Intimation and Implication, so resolved it. *Nestorius*, in the same *MERCATOR*, does it more plainly and directly, For He asserts, that the *Body* and *Blood* of Christ, do, *by Baptism* (N. B.) loose the *penal* Sentences, which stand in Force against All the *Unregenerate* *. What is This, but saying that Infants, *in and by Baptism*, are *Partakers* of Christ's *Body* and *Blood*, and so, in Effect, are *Communicants* without *literally* receiving the *outward* Communion?

The *Hypognosticon*, which has sometimes been ascribed to *St. AUSTIN*, is now believed by the best Criticks, to belong to our *MERCATOR*. There we are told, that Infants, born under Defilement, are cleansed, *in Baptism*, by the *Blood* of Christ †: Consequently, They are *Partakers* of the *Blood* of Christ, *in and by Baptism*. The same Author, after quoting *John* vi. 53 to prove, against the *Pelagians*, that Infants could not be *saved* without *Baptism*, asks, How They could have the *Life of the Kingdom of Heaven*, without being born again

of

Nos redemit, salvos fecit per Lavacrum Regenerationis & Renovationis. Ergo, & Salus, & Redemptio, & Renovatio est. Nullane ergo Poena erit non-baptizatis Parvulis, non habere *Salutem, Redemptionem, Renovationem*? — *Non manducare Carnem Domini, & bibere Sanguinem ejus?* De quo Sacramento Vox Salvatoris est, *nisi manducaveritis, &c.* Quod certe, sine ulla Tergiversatione, sine *Baptismo* Nullus usurpat, nec fit illius *Particeps* Sacramenti. *Mercat.* Subnotat. c. viii. p. 53.

* — Auferet enim secum Unusquisque (Catechumenus) *penales Sententias* adversum Naturam prolatas. Non enim factus est *Particeps Corporis ejus & Sanguinis*, qui *per Baptismum* has Sententias solvit, &c. *Mar. Mer.* p. 77.

† Hoc Ceno Peccati, quo nascuntur Squalidi, ut in Regnum Caelorum ingrediantur immaculati, immaculato, *per Baptismum*, Sanguine Christi mandantur. *Hypognost.* L. V. c. ii. p. 37. *Augustin.* Opp. Tom. X.

of Water and of the Spirit, being neither *fed* with the *Flesh* of Christ, nor made to drink of His *Blood shed* for Remission of Sins* ? Had He intended This of their literally partaking of Both Sacraments, He must have denied the *Sufficiency* of Baptism alone to Remission ; which would be flatly contradictory to his express Doctrine in the Passage before cited, and other Places of the same Treatise † : Therefore He must mean, that Baptism alone supplies all the Uses of the other Sacrament, making the Person, for the Time being, a *Partaker* of the *Body* and of the *Blood* of Christ : And indeed, He almost says it in Terms, when He says of such Infants, that They are *baptized* in the *Blood* of Christ ‡, and at the same Time calls Baptism their *Drink*.

FAUSTUS REIENSIS, supposed to be the Author that goes under the Name of EUSEBIUS EMISENENS, argues against the Pelagians from John vi. 53. much after the same Way, and is to be interpreted by the same Rules §. As I have Nothing very particular to observe from Him, it may suffice just to have mentioned Him in his Turn. He flourished about A. D. 472.

Pope GELASIUS flourished in the Close of the same Century, about A. D. 492. He reinforces the same Argument for the Necessity of Infant-Baptism, drawn from John vi. 53. insisting upon it, that Infants cannot have Life without *eating* Christ's *Flesh*, and *drinking* His *Blood* ; nor so *eat* and *drink*, unless *baptized*. He may be understood of *spiritual Feeding*, abstracted from the *Eucharist*. For He does not say, that They must so *eat* and *drink* in the *Eucharist* : But He asserts, that Infants obtain Life by Their Baptism, and that They are translated to God's

* Quomodo igitur Vitam Regni Cœlorum promittitis Parvulis non renatis ex Aqua & Spiritu Sancto, non cibatis Carne, neque potatis Sanguine Christi, qui fusus est in Remissionem Peccatorum ? Ibid. Lib. V. c. v. p. 40.

† Omnino in Remissionem Peccatorum baptizantur & Parvuli : Alioquin non habebunt in Regno Cœlorum Vitam. Dimittitur enim eis Regeneratione Spirituali quod traxerunt, ut sæpe dixi, ex Adam generatione carnali. C. viii. p. 42.

‡ Attende Edictui ejus : Non Opus est sanis Medicus, sed male habentibus. Et adversus eum falsum de Parvulis dicere conticelce, qui Eis Potum, non sanis, sed aegrotantibus Baptismum in suo Sanguine procuravit. Ibid. c. viii. p. 42.

§ Nisi manducaveritis, &c. Quod Testimonium contra Pelagii Blasphemias evidentissimum atque validissimum est, qui asserere arrepta Impietate præsumit, non propter Vitam, sed propter Regnum Cœlorum Baptismum Parvulis conferendum. Sub his enim Dei Verbis, quibus Evangelista pronuntiat, non habebitis Vitam in vobis, aperte intelligenda est omnis Anima munere Baptismi vacua, non solum Gloria carere, sed Vita. Faust. Regiens. in Pasch. Hom. V. p. 267.

God's right Hand by *Sacred Regeneration* *. This is too much for Him to have said, had He thought that the *actual Use* of Both Sacraments had been as *necessary* as *One*: But if the *Primit* Sacrament, in such a Case, was thought to be *Equivalent* to Both, or eminently to *contain Both*, then all is rational and right.

We may now come down to FULGENTIUS, at the Head of the next Century. He indeed was the first Man who spake clearly, fully, and distinctly to the Point now in Hand, having a particular Occasion for so doing. The Difficulty had not been started before: Or there had appeared no Difficulty in it, among Such as understood the prevailing Principles of former Times. However, in FULGENTIUS's Days, FERRANDUS, One of his *Deacons*, had proposed a Scruple to FULGENTIUS, about the *Necessity* or *Use* of the *Eucharist* to Those who had been *baptized*; desiring to know whether, if Any died immediately after *Baptism*, and before They could receive the *Eucharist*, They incurred any Damage, or *none*; and if any, *how much*, or *what* †.

FULGENTIUS, without the least Scruple, or Hesitation, immediately solved his Doubt, by telling Him, that from the Moment any Person was *baptized*, He was *ipso facto* a Communicant, a *Partaker* of the *Bread* of the *Eucharist*, as He was a *Member* of the *Body* signified in it, and as He was Himself a *Part* of That very *Body*, and of That very *Sacrifice* there offered; meaning the collective *Body* of true *Christians*. This He declares to be the Doctrine of the *Holy Fathers* before Him, which They had believed and taught as an *unquestionable* *Verity* ‡. He goes on to confirm the same from a whole Sermon

of

* Quia propria non habent ulla Peccata, constat eis sola prorsus Originalia relaxari. Itaque omnibus, etiam solis, remissis, Vitam per Baptismum consequuntur aeternam, &c.—Unde & Dominus ait (quod utique nisi baptizatis convenit) Qui non manducaverit, &c. De Vita autem aeterna Hoc dictum Nullus addubitat, quoniam Multi non manducantes hoc Sacramentum Vitam habere videntur praesentem. Nihil est ergo quod dicant quod non renati Infantes tantummodo in Regnum Coelorum ire non valeant:—dum sine Baptismate Corpus & Sanguinem Christi nec edere valeant, nec potare, sine autem hoc Vitam in semetipsis habere non possint.—Baptizatos finant ad dextram salutarem sacra Regenerationis transferri. Gelas. apud Harduin. Concil. Tom. II. p. 390.

† Petimus ut veloci Responsione Nos instruas, utrum noceat, quantum noceat, an omnino nihil noceat, si Quis baptizatus in Nomine Sanctae Trinitatis, sacro Cibo Potuque fraudetur. Ferrand. ad Fulgent. p. 215.

‡ Tunc incipit. Unusquisque Particeps esse illius unius Panis, quando coeperit Membrum esse illius unius Corporis, quod in singulis Membris, quando in Baptismo Capiti Christo subjungitur, tunc jam Deo viva Hostia veraciter

of St. AUSTIN Himself *. From hence We may clearly perceive how to reconcile the more obscure Passages of St. AUSTIN, or other *Fathers*, so as to make Their *standing Doctrine* of the *Sufficiency of Baptism* perfectly consistent with what They have been thought to teach of the *Necessity of Infant-Communion*. They did not mean (as indeed They did never say) that *baptized* Infants must presently be admitted to the Lord's Table, or must receive the consecrated *Bread*, or *Wine*: All They really meant was, that *unbaptized* Infants must have *Baptism*, must have *Regeneration*, in Order to incorporate Them into Christ's Body, and to make Them truly *Partakers* of His *Flesh* and *Blood*. Being once *so regenerate*, and *so incorporate*, They were *Communicants* of Course, in *Construction* of *Gospel-law*, and in *Church-Account*, as much as if They had, *literally* received the *Holy-Communion*.

FULGENTIUS therefore concludes His Epistle with these excellent Words: "No One ought to entertain any the least Doubt, but that Every One of the Faithful is then made a Partaker of the Lord's Body and Blood, when He is made a Member of Christ's Body in Baptism. Neither can He be thought *no sharer* in the [Sacramental] Bread and Cup, tho' He should depart this Life before He eats of that Bread, or drinks of that Cup; provided only that He retains his Union with Christ's Body; For, He is not without a *Partnership* in that Sacrament, or without the *Benefit* of it, so long as He is Himself That *very Thing* which The Sacrament imports †."

This Resolution of FULGENTIUS may be sufficient to end all Dispute on this Head; considering how *clear*, and how *peremptory*

veraciter immolatur. Illo enim *Nativitatis* Munere sic fit *Sacrificium* sicut fit & *Templum*. Qui ergo *Membrum* Corporis Christi fit, quomodo non accipit quod Ipse fit, quando utique illius fit *verum* Corporis *Membrum*, cuius Corporis est in *Sacrificio* Sacramentum? Hoc ergo fit Ille *Regeneratione* Sancti Baptismatis, quod est de *Sacrificio* sumpturus *Altaris*. Quod etiam Sanctos Patres *indubitanter credidisse et docuisse* cognoscimus. Beatus etiam *Augustinus* de hac Re Sermonem fecit admodum luculentum, &c. *Fulgent.* ad *Ferrand.* p. 226.

* Vid. *Augustin.* Sermon. CCLXXII. p. 1103. Tom. V. Edit. Bened. Conf. Sermon. CCXXVII. p. 973. & Sermon. CCXXIX. p. 977.

† Nec Ciquam esse aliquatenus ambigendum tunc Unumquemque Fidelium Corporis Sanguinisque Dominici *Participem* fieri quando in Baptismate *Membrum* Corporis Christi efficitur: Nec alienari ab illo *Panis Calicisque Consortio*, etiamsi antequam *Panem* illum comedat, & *Calicem* bibat, de hoc saeculo; in unitate Corporis Christi constitutus, abscedat. *Sacramenti* quippe illius *Participatione* & *Beneficio* non privatur, quando Ipse Hoc quod illud Sacramentum *significat*, invenitur. *Fulgent.* *ibid.* p. 227, 228.

peremptory it is, and given in the Name of the *Holy Father* before Him; considering likewise, how *knowing*, and how *eminent* a Personage He was, how near to *St. AUSTIN's Days*, and how great an Admirer of Him and His Writings; an *African*, also, and the *Mouth*, as it were, of all the *African Churches* in His Time.

I am aware that Endeavours have been used to elude the Force of His Testimony*. But the Pretences are slight and trivial, mostly built upon Misconception and Misrepresentation†, as every discerning Reader will perceive upon the slightest Examination: And therefore I shall spare my self the Trouble of confuting, or reciting Them‡.

III.

I have now pursued this Matter down from the Beginning of the *Fifth Century*, to the Beginning of the *Sixth*: So it rested, as I apprehend, till the *Dark Ages* came on; till the Close of the *Eighth Century*, or the Opening of the *Ninth*. Then began some Variation in This Matter; when the *ancient Principles* might easily be forgotten, or else be misunderstood. From That Time, we may date the *first Rise* of the Doctrine of the *Strict Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*. About the Year 794, there are some Appearances of such a Notion's beginning to prevail§: But in the Century next following, it made great Advances; when it came to be a Rule, that a *Presbyter* should have the Eucharist *always ready*, to give to *Infants*, either as soon as baptized, or when in Danger

* *Whithy*, *Strictur. Patr.* p. 214.

Bingham, xv. 4, 7.

† It is strangely mistaking Him, to say He resolved the Case into the *Necessity* of it, or *unavoidable Impediment* (such as in which the Ancients judged favourably of the want, even of *Baptism* it self) when He so plainly resolves it into quite another Principle, *viz.* That *Infants baptized*, are by Their *Baptism* Communicants in *just Construction*, and real Effect, as therein *partaking of Christ*, of His *Body* and *Blood*, yea and of His *Table*.

‡ *Bede's Construction* of *John vi. 53*, may give some Light to *Fulgentius*. *Nemo absque hujus [Sacramenti] Consortio, Vitæ Consort possit esse perennis: Nisi enim manducaveritis, &c.* *Bed.* in *Genes. L. III.* in *Gen. xiv. 18, 19, 20*. No one can have *Part* in eternal Life, without having *Part* in That Sacrament. So far is certain. But then it is to be considered, that every *baptized Person*, who has not forfeited, nor impaired His *Baptism*, continually has *Part in*, or *partakes of* the Lord's Table: He is a Communicant *in Right*, and in *real Effect*, without any Thing more. He is a *Guest* of that Table, in the same Sense as He is a *Citizen* of Heaven.

§ *Vid. Caroli M. Capit. prolux. de non adorand. Inigin. L. II. c. xxvii. A. D. 757.*

Danger of Death *; and that if a Bishop were not present to *confirm* a Child immediately upon *Baptism*. The officiating Priest should not wait, but should directly give Him the *Communion* †. These, and the like Rules, were plain Indications of such a Notion's prevailing in the *Latin Churches* of those Times. And One may draw a good presumptive Argument from thence, that no such Principle had obtain'd in the *earlier Ages*, because no such *Rules* were then thought on, so far as appears ‡. One may observe, by the Reasons given in the 9th Century, and after, for *Infant-Communion*, that the Advocates for it were far gone off from the *antient Principles* of the Church, and particularly from Those of St. AUSTIN. For Instance, JESSE, Bishop of *Amiens*, about A. D. 814. insists upon Communion, that the Infant may become a *Member of Christ* §: and RABANUS MAURUS, A. D. 847. requires the same, that the Child may thereby become the *Temple of God* ||: Both which Effects were sufficiently provided for by *Baptism* alone, according to St. AUSTIN, and All the *antient Fathers*. No wonder therefore, if a *wrong Practice* came in, when once Men had forgotten the *old and right Principles*. How long, or how far the Doctrine of the *Necessity of Infant-Communion* prevailed in the *West*, does not certainly appear ¶. Archbishop LANFRANC, of the XIth Century; A. D. 1073, dis-
owned

* Semp(er) Eucharistiam Presbyter habeat paratam ut quando Quis infirmatus fuerit, aut Parvulus aegrotaverit, statim Eum communicet, ne sine viatico moriatur. *Walt. Aurelian. c. vii. p. 461. Harduin. Concil. Tom. V. Conf. Regino. L. I. c. lxix. p. 57. Ivon. Decret. Part. II. c. xx. Burchard. L. V. c. x. Vid. etiam Martene De Antiq. Eccl. Rit. Tom. I. p. 160, 162. Tom. III. p. 548. Baluz. Not. ad Region. p. 551. Bingham, XV. 4, 7.*

† Postea vestiatur Infans Vestimentis suis. Si vero Episcopus adest, statim confirmari Eum oportet Chrismate, & postea communicare: Et si Episcopus deest, communicetur a Presbytero. *Pseud. Alcuin. Offic. de Sabbat. Pasch. p. 259. Conf. Martene, Tom. I. p. 192, 195, 197.*

‡ So far from it, that the Antients made no Provision for the *Eucharist* (like as for *Baptism*) in extreme Cases; never allowed any *Deacon*, much less a *Laic*, to administer. They suffered Many to die without *Confirmation*, in Country Villages, and so of Course without the *Eucharist* (to which Confirmation ought to be *previous*) apprehending no Danger to the *Salvation* of Infants by those Neglects. *Vid. Hieron. Dialog. contr. Lucifer. c. iv. Conf. Concil. Eliberit. Can. LXXVII.*

§ Ut Christi Membra esse possit. *Jesse Ambianens. apud Baluz. in Not. ad Regin. p. 552.*

|| Ut Deum habere mereatur in se Habitorem. *Raban. Maur. De Instit. Cleric. c. 28.*

¶ It is thought to have continued in some Churches to the XIIth or XIIIth Century. See *Bingham. XV. 4, 7. Caloper. Ritual. Eccles. Tom. I. p. 306.*

owned it; declaring it no Doctrine of the *English*, or foreign Churches: And He scrupled not to argue against it from *Scripture*, and *Reason*, and likewise from *St. Austin's Principles* *.

The *Greeks* had not yet come into the Notion of the Strict Necessity of *Infant-Communion*, if we may judge by the Rule of *CHRISTODULUS*, Patriarch of *Alexandria* in the *XIth* Century, A. D. 1048; which was, that, ordinarily, Communion should be administered to Infants along with Baptism; but that, in Cases of Extremity, Baptism only should be given, without the *Eucharist* †: From which we may reasonably infer, that The *Greeks* of That Time did not think (whatever Others may have thought since) that *Baptism* and the *Eucharist* were of equal Necessity: For, had They so conceived, They would have contrived, some Way or other, to administer Both together to every dying Infant. The more modern *Greeks* of the *XIVth* Century, and downwards, have pleaded warmly for *Infant-Communion*; and the Necessity of it, in their Disputes with the *Latins* ‡; grounding their Doctrine upon *John vi. 53.* rigorously interpreted: And yet They know very well how to explain That Text to a virtual, not literal Communion, as often as They have a Mind to prove from the same Text, that *Saints departed* were Communicants of the *Altar* §. I shall say Nothing of the present Practice of the *Greek* or *Oriental Churches*; because it would lead me too far, to do it distinctly; and a confused general Account would be of no Use. Enough has been said to shew, that the Necessity of *Infant-Communion* has not the Countenance of *Antiquity*: The Rest is of small Moment, in Comparison,

IV.

I intend not, however, by any Thing which I have here said, to deny that the *Antients* admitted Persons much younger to Communion, than is now commonly done in these Western Parts of the World. All I insist upon is, that They gave not the Communion to mere Infants, but to Children, perhaps 5, 6, 7, or 10 Years old; and That under a Notion of

* *Lanfranc*, Epist. ad *Donat.* p. 361.

† Quando *Infanti* Baptismus administratur, jejunos erit, &c. neque absque Communione licet Baptismum administrare. Hæc autem intelligenda sunt juxta alios Canones multos, nempe si Periculum mortis non urgeat: Tunc enim, non modo licet, sed præcipitur administrare Baptismum absque *Eucharistia*. *Renaudot*. *Histor. Patriarch. Alex.* p. 483.

‡ Vid. *Arcudius*, p. 45—50, 324.

§ Vid. *Nicol. Cabasilas* *Exposit. Liturgiæ.* c. xlii. p. 233, in *Biblioth. Patr.* Tom. II. Ed. *Parisi.* And compare *Arcudius*.

of prudent *Caution*, rather than of *strict Necessity*, so far as appears.

CYPRIAN (about A. D. 250) speaks of a young Girl's receiving the *Eucharist* * : But learned Men † observe, that She might be, or probably was, 4 or 5 Years old : Others dispute the Probability, thinking she was not so old, but a mere Infant ‡ : Whatever the Case was, it was a *single Instance*, so far as appears, and of *one particular Church*, the Church of *Carthage* ; and it is not said upon *what Principle* such Practice was founded.

The *Constitutions*, called *Apostolical*, twice make mention of *Children*, as receiving the *Communion* §. They were *Children*, *παιδιά*, not mere *Infants*, not *νήπιοι*. They might be 7 or or 10 years old, or older : From whence an Argument may be drawn, that the *Infants* did not communicate ; since They are not so much as named in this particular Recital.

TIMOTHY, Bishop of *Alexandria*, in his *Canonical Answers*, about A. D. 380, puts the Case of a Lad of *seven years old*, a *Catechumen*, being present at the *Oblation*, and eating of it thro' Ignorance ; and He determines, that such Lad, so receiving, should immediately be *baptized* ||. One may reasonably from thence conjecture, that *seven Years of Age* was then thought an Age proper for receiving. For how could such a Lad steal in and receive, if other Lads of His Size or Years did not then come to the Lord's Table ? One may farther perhaps infer, that *That* was the *lowest Age* then and there approved of for the *Communion* : For otherwise, why should He so particularly have mention'd *That Age*, or why should He not have made the same Rule for Lads of 4, 5, or 6 Years old, had Any come to *Communion* so young in *That Church* ?

Pope LEO (about A. D. 440) speaks of communicating *Infants* : But by His Account of Them, They were old enough to make Their *Responses*, to say *Amen*, if not more ¶.

DIONYSIUS so called (probably *Petrus Fullo* **, who lived about A. D. 480) is supposed to speak of the *Communion* as given to *Children* †† : But, an attentive Reader will see Reason

* *Cyprian De Lapsis*, p. 132.

† *Wall. Hist. of Inf. Bapt. Part II. c. ix. n. 15. Zornius Opusc. Sacr. Tom. I. p. 735.*

‡ *Peirce. Essay on Infant-Communion*, p. 38, &c.

§ *Constit. Apostol. L. VIII. c. xii. p. 403. c. xiii. p. 409.*

|| *Timoth. Alexandr. apud Harduin. Concil.*

¶ *Leo. Epist. 49. p. 518. Tom. I. Edit. Quenell.*

** *Vid. Lequien. Dissertat. Damascen. p. 43.*

†† *Dionysius. Eccles. Hierarch. c. vii. n. 11. p. 417.*

son to believe, that the whole Passage is to be understood of *Baptism* only*.

GENNADIUS MASSILIENSIS mentions *Children* as admitted to *Communion*, after returning from Heretical Assemblies to the Church: And He would have Others *answer* for Them with Respect to Their *Faith*. He lays down the same Rule for *Adults* in that Case, if slow of Understanding †. So that the *Parvuli*, the *Children*, of whom He speaks, might be 7, or 10 Years old, if not more: For Boys at That Age might not be capable of giving any rational, satisfactory Account of their *Faith*, in disputed Articles.

GREGORY of *Tours* (about A. D. 573) tells us a Story of an *Infant-Jew* who happened to receive the *Eucharist* among the *Christian Children*, Communicants §. The Story perhaps is fabulous: But His Manner of telling it is an Argument of the *Practice* of His own Time. However, That Child which He speaks of was supposed to be old enough to make a Report of what had been done, and therefore was not a mere *Infant*.

The XIth Council of *Toledo* (A. D. 673) has been sometimes cited in Favour of the *Practice* of *Infant-Communion*; where, in Mitigation of a former Canon (which had laid the Censure of Excommunication upon Those who did not eat and drink the Elements, when administred) They provided a *Salvo* or Exception for Persons under Sickness, or under a State of *Infancy*: But I leave it to the Learned to consider whether the Words may not rather be understood of *Adult* Persons, who might happen to be *speechless* thro' some Disease, and so not able to give Account of Themselves, during That Exigency: For, it would be strange to imagine, or suspect that any mere *Infants* shou'd be excommunicated.

BEDE, in the Year 734, speaks of *Boys* and *Girls* coming to *Communion*, and both approves and advises it ¶: But He says not a word of mere *Infants*: Which yet He could not well have omitted on That Occasion, had it been the *Practice* of His Time, or had He entertain'd any Notion of the strict *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*.

The *Gregorian Sacramentary* does indeed speak very plainly of

* Conf. Pseudo-justin. *Question. ad. Orthodox.* 375, 376.

And Vasquez. *Tom: III.* p. 337.

† Gennadius *Massil.* *Dogmat.* c. xxii.

§ *Gregor. Turon.* p. 732. Ed. Bened.

Niceph. L. XVII. c. xxv.

¶ *Beda* *Epist.* ad *Egbert.* p. 311. Edit. Cant.

of *Infant-Communion* * : And so likewise does the *Ordo Romanus* † : But Both those Offices, considered as *interpolated*, and according to the State they now appear in, may reasonably be judged to bear Date not earlier than the Decline of the VIIth Century, or Beginning of the IXth, if so early ‡. By That Time, it is granted *Infant-Communion* had crept in, and under a Persuasion of its *Necessity*, founded upon *John vi*, taken together with some Passages of the *Ancients* misunderstood.

The Sum is, that the *early Ages* did give the Communion, not to *mere Infants*, but to *Children* of ten years old, or perhaps *seven*; scarcely to Any younger; unless we may except the single Instance reported by CYPRIAN. I mention *Ten years old*; because That was the Age pitch'd upon as the most likely for Children, ordinarily, to become guilty of *actual Sin*, or for Sin to be *imputed* §. I mention *seven*; because some Children (of better Education, or riper Capacity) might even at that Age be thought capable of Sin : Or That Age might be pitch'd upon for the greater Caution and Security : Such seems to have been the Rule formerly in the Church of *Alexandria*; as I have before hinted, and of some *Latins* in later Times || : And such is the Rule of the *Muscovites* at This Day ¶ ; derived, very probably, from *ancient Tradition*. For, tho' the *Ancients* constantly maintain'd the *Sufficiency* of *Baptism* to the *Salvation* of *Infants*; yet They extended it not beyond the Time of Their *Infancy*, or *Non-age*; conceiving it to hold certainly while such Children should be incapable of *actual Sin*, or *grievous Sin*, and no longer **: So that as soon as a Child

* Pontifex redit in Sacram, expectans ut cum vestiti fuerint Infantes, confirmet Eos, Qui etiam non prohibentur lactari ante Sacram Communionem. *Gregor. Sacram. L. I. c. xx.*

† Illud autem de Parvulis providendum est, ut postquam baptizati fuerint, nullum Cibum accipiant, nec lactentur antequam communicent Sacramenta Corporis Christi. *Ordo. Rom. I. p. 28. in Mabillon. Mus. Ital. Tom. II. Conf. Martene de Antiq. Eccl. Rit. Tom. I. p. 177, 179, 180, 181, 198.*

‡ See *Dodwell*, of Incensing, n. 55. p. 218.

Dallaus, De Confirmat. p. 377.

Oudin, Tom. I. p. 1818.

§ Vid. *Timoth. Alex.* Canonic. Respons.

Conf. *Martene*, De Antiq. Eccl. Rit. Tom. I. p. 431.

|| Vid. *Martene*, Anecd. Tom. IV. p. 712, 1082.

Apostol. Const. L. VII. c. xxv. p. 374.

¶ *Harris's Voyages*, Vol. II. p. 182, 238.

Brerewood, p. 167.

** See *St. Austin* above, p. 8, 10.

The same Principle obtained down to the IXth Century, as appears from *Strabo*, De Reb. Eccl. c. vi.

Child should arrive to the Age at which Sins are imputable, They might think the use of the *other* Sacrament *necessary*, or at least *expedient* and *safe*. The Doctrine of our Church is; that it is certain by God's Word, that Children which are baptized, dying before They commit actual Sin, are undoubtedly saved*: In which Words the undoubted Sufficiency of Baptism is extended no farther, than to the Time of committing actual Sin. The Sufficiency of Baptism, while it excludes the Necessity of Infant-Communion, is no Argument by it self against a more early Communion than is now in Practice amongst us: So that the *Antients* were very consistent in not admitting Infant-Communion properly so called, but withal admitting Children of 6, 7, or 10 Years of Age to the Lord's Table.

However, it is certain that They did not, could not proceed upon John vi, in such Their Practice: For, had They founded it upon Verse 53d, rigorously interpreted, They must have given the Communion even to mere Infants, as the Greeks of late Times have done†. The *Antients* seem to have founded Their Practice upon prudential Reasons, or general Reasons of Edification, pursuant to Christian Principles. They knew that Children were safe in Their Baptism, while guilty of no actual Sins: They knew not so certainly whether They were secure after committing Sins, without Repentance and the Eucharist besides: They chose what They thought was safest and best: Upon that Principle, probably (for I have no clear and certain Authorities for it) They gave the Communion to Children, at such an Age as I have before mentioned.

V.

Now, if it should be ask'd, whether We at this Day may not be obliged to do the same? I take leave to answer as follows.

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1. Scrip-

* Rubrick at the End of the Office of Publick Baptism of Infants. N. B. This Rubrick in King Edward's First Book ran thus: *And that no Man shall think, that any Detriment shall come to Children by differring of Their Confirmation, He shall know for Truth, that it is certain by God's Word, that Children being baptized (if They depart out of this Life in Their Infancy) are undoubtedly saved.* In King Edward's Second Book, it ran thus: *It is certain by God's Word, that Children being baptized have all Things necessary for Their Salvation, and be undoubtedly saved.* At the Restoration it was altered to what it now is, amounting to the same in Sense with what it first was.

† Nic. Cabasilas of the XIVth Century, Simeon Thessalonicensis of the XVth, and Others of the XVIth are cited in Arcudius de Concord. Eccl. p. 45, &c. 324, &c. Compare Gabriel Sionita in Leo Allatius, p. 1657.

Smith's Account of the Greek Church, p. 161.

Simon's Crit. Hist. p. 5, 6, 13.

Covel, p. 186.

1. Scripture hath not precisely determined, at *what Age* a Person should first be admitted to Communion: 2. There is no *Example* of admitting young *Children* to it, till the Time of CYPRIAN, the Middle of the *Third Century*: And it might be much later, before the Practice became general. 3. If the Practice was founded (as probably it was) upon This Principle; that as soon as *Baptism* became *impaired*, the Use of the *Eucharist* ought to come in as *subsidiary*, or *supplemental* to it; it was a Principle of Weight, but not *certain* enough to create any *strict Obligation*: For, since *Baptism* hath its *federal Effect* all along; who can presume to say, that the *Baptism preceding*, and the *Repentance subsequent*, may not be *sufficient* for *Remission*, 'till such Time as *Children* grow up to *riper Age*, so as to be better qualified for *Self-Examination*, and for *discerning the Lord's Body* in the Holy Communion? 4. Since the Question seems to turn chiefly upon the *Expediency* of the Thing, and since *Expediency* is known to vary with Times and Circumstances; it seems to be mostly left to the *Wisdom* and *Integrity* of Church-Governors, to determine, in every Church, what shall be judged, upon the whole, most for the Honour of God, and the Interests of true Religion, and the Good of Souls. Much may be pleaded, on the Foot of *Expediency*, for the *ancient Practice* *: Much also may be pleaded, on the same Foot of *Expediency*, for the *Modern Usage* †. A Multitude of Circumstances must be taken into Account, in Order to form a clear Judgment upon the whole: And therefore, as I before hinted, it seems to be a Matter properly lodged with the Church-Governors; whose Directions therein are the safest Rule for private Christians to be guided by, and to submit to without Hesitation or Scruple. The *Antients* express'd Their *Reverence* for the Sacrament in a Way suitable, perhaps, to Their Circumstances: The *Moderns* may express *no less Reverence* for the same Sacrament in a Way somewhat different, as Circumstances are also different. It is sufficient to have shewn, that the *Antients* did not practise *Infant-Communion*, properly so called, at all; nor give the Communion to *Children* under a Notion of such strict *Necessity* as hath been pretended. They had Their *prudential Reasons* for Their Practice

* See Bishop Taylor's Worthy Communicant, Ch. iii. § 2. p. 142, &c. Pierce's Essay, Part IV. p. 171, &c.

† See Bishop Taylor, *ibid.* p. 147.

• Suicer. Thesaur. Tom. II. p. 1139. Bingham, XV. 4. 7.

Arcudius, de Concord. Eccl. p. 44.

Torwerson on the Sacraments, p. 282.

Practice in Their Times; and We also have the like *prudential* Reasons for a *different* Practice in Ours.

VI.

Before I take Leave of the Subject, it may not be improper to take some Notice of the Conduct of the *Romanists* with relation to the Charge made against the *Antients*; as likewise of the Conduct of the *Protestants* in relation to the same Charge: Because, as I conceive, Neither of Them have been so careful to do the *Antients* Justice in This Article, as might have been expected, or desired.

The *Romanists*, for the Sake of Two great *Popes*, INNOCENT and GELASIUS, and for the Honour of the *Trent-Council*, are obliged, in a Manner, to acquit the *Antients* of teaching the *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*: And therefore several very learned Writers * amongst Them have particularly laboured in This Article, to take off the injurious Imputation. Nevertheless, They appear but faint or lame Advocates in This Cause; not maintaining it to Advantage, or not upon right Principles; because They are perplexed with Another Cause, wherein They think it concerns Them to extol the *Eucharist* very highly, derogating as much from the *Other Sacrament*. They cannot bear to be told, that *Baptism* carries in it all the *Spiritual Graces* and *Privileges* which the *Eucharist* can be supposed to do; or that it is as properly a *Sacrifice* as the *Eucharist* is; or that it makes a Person *Partaker* of the *Body* and *Blood* of Christ, for the Time being, as much as the *Eucharist* does. These are all true and sound Principles; and upon These Principles, the *Antients* maintained the *Sufficiency* of *Baptism*, in Opposition to any supposed *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*: But as the present *Romanists* cannot go so far, without risking the Credit of *Transubstantiation*, which They are strangely fond of; They cannot make so clear, or open, or full Defence of the *Fathers* in This Article, as might be wish'd. MALDONATE †, for His Part, was content to give Them up in This Point, for the Sake of establishing His own Construction of *John vi.* And a late zealous Defender of *Transubstantiation*, finding that the high Notions of the *Efficacy* of *Baptism* stood in His Way,

* *Arcudius* de Sacram. Euchar. L. iii. c. xlv. p. 344. &c.

Bona de Reb. Liturg. L. ii. c. xix. p. 711.

Noris Vindic. Augustin. c. iv. p. 71. item p. 167.

Natalis Alexand. Tom. III. Sec. ii. Dissert. XVI. p. 549. item Tom. V. p. 129.

The *Benedictine* Editors of *St. Austin*, Tom. X.

Theol. Lovaniens. Augustin. Opp. Tom. VII. p. 189. in Annot.

Vasquez. in 3 Thom. Disp. 214. c. iv. S. 35, 36.

† *Maldonat.* in *Johan.* vi. 53. p. 1486, 1487, 1488.

Way, has been pleased to insinuate, that what the *Antients* have, so frequently inculcated in Favour of *One* Sacrament, was to be understood of *Both* Sacraments in Conjunction †; and thus He hoped to get clear of the plain and full Testimonies pleaded by the learned and judicious ALBERTINUS †. This new Turn may indeed serve the *Romish Cause*, in *One* Branch of Controversy; but it is betraying it in *Another*, wherein the Credit of *Pope INNOCENT*, and of *Pope GELASIUS*, and of the Decrees of the *Trent-Council* appear nearly concerned: For, unless the *Fathers* really taught the *Sufficiency* of *Baptism* alone, to such Purposes as have been mention'd, there is no effectual Way of clearing the *Fathers* from the Charge of maintaining the *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*; tho' the *Trent-Council* hath affirm'd that They stand clear of it.

As to *Protestants*, I cannot say that They have conducted always unexceptionably in This Article: For tho', in the Controversy about the *Eucharist*, They have constantly pleaded the Authority of the *Antients*, as to making *Baptism* equivalent to the *Eucharist* in all Respects, or in some Respects more considerable, which is so far right; yet, for the Sake of overthrowing *Papal Infallibility*, They have sometimes been too willing to give up *INNOCENT* and *GELASIUS*, (and with Them *St. AUSTIN* also, and other *Antients* §) with respect to the *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*: Which, in Effect, seems to be pulling down with one Hand, what They build with the other. Either let the *Antients* be allowed to speak fully up to the *Sufficiency* of *Baptism*; and then They add much Weight to the *Protestant Cause* in the Controversy about the *Eucharist*: Or, if They were weak enough to assert the *Necessity* of *Infant-Communion*; let Them not be called in to prove that *Baptism* amounted to *Spiritual Sacrifice*, or that it was the same Thing, in Effect, with *Feeding* upon the *Body* and *Blood* of *Christ*. There is no maintaining *both* Parts, no reconciling *both* Ends of a Contradiction. *One* of the Positions, as they confront each other, must be given up: And I am willing to hope, enough hath been said to determine impartial Judges, *which* to give up, and *which* to retain.

† *Touttai* Dissertat. præv. in *Cyrrill. Hieros.* p. 192, 206, 208.

† *Albertin. de Eucharist.*

§ *So Dr. Wall. Hist. of Inf. Bapt. Part II. c. 9.*

And *Bingham XV. 4, 7.* But *Thorndike* thought more justly of the *Fathers* in This Article, *Epilog. p. 176. De jur. finiend. Controv. p. 285.*



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